

Official Report of the
One Hundred Sixty-fifth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle
Salt Lake City, Utah

September 30 and October 1, 1995

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Report of the 165th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 165th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 1995, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, September 30 and October 1, 1995. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, September 30, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session.

Television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout the world. In addition, the conference was carried by satellite transmission to more than 1,000 stake centers. The priesthood session was also carried by closed-circuit transmission to approximately 900 locations in many countries.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

The First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

The Quorum of the Twelve: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

The Presidency of the Seventy: Carlos E. Asay, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, and Harold G. Hillam

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:*¹ Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Ben B. Banks, William R. Bradford, Ted E. Brewerton, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, D. Todd Christofferson, J. Richard Clarke, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, F. Melvin Hammond, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Marlin K. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Cree-L. Kofford, Dean L. Larsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Hans B. Ringger, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., David E. Sorensen, Earl C. Tingey, Robert E. Wells, and W. Craig Zwick

The Second Quorum of the Seventy: Lino Alvarez, Dallas N. Archibald, Eduardo Ayala, C. Max Caldwell, Gary J. Coleman, Claudio R. M. Costa, Rulon G. Craven, LeGrand R. Curtis, Julio E. Dávila, Graham W. Doxey, John E. Fowler, In Sang Han, W. Don Ladd, W. Mack Lawrence, Augusto A. Lim, John M. Madsen, Helvécio Martins, James O. Mason, V. Dallas Merrell, Joseph C. Muren, Stephen D. Nadauld, Bruce D. Porter, Jorge A. Rojas, Sam K. Shimabukuro, F. David Stanley, Kwok

¹Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi was excused.

Yuen Tai, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, J Ballard Washburn, Lance B. Wickman, Lowell D. Wood, and Durrel A. Woolsey

The Presiding Bishopric: Merrill J. Bateman, H. David Burton, and Richard C. Edgley

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 1995, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music for the session was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "Praise to the Man." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

It's a beautiful morning here in the valley of the mountains. We had a wonderful rain yesterday, and the sun is shining brightly this morning.

We welcome each of you from the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in this the first general session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We welcome all who are participating in the large audience which fills the historic Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Robert D. Hales, Dean L. Larsen, and Jorge A. Rojas are seated on the stand, and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Spen-

cer J. Condie and Dieter F. Uchtdorf are in attendance.

We welcome also the many others who are receiving these proceedings by satellite transmission, radio, cable, and television.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi, who is serving as president of the Tokyo Temple.

We acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary general presidencies, seated on the stand.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge the beautiful floral arrangements which have been provided through the kindness of faithful Saints living in Hawaii.

The music for this session will be provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The chorus opened this session by singing "Praise to the Man" and will now favor us with "Rock of Ages." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ronald E. Poelman of the Seventy.

The chorus sang "Rock of Ages."

Elder Ronald E. Poelman offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Gathering for conference

My brethren and sisters, it is wonderful that we have the opportunity of meeting together each six months in these great world conferences. We gather from over the earth to bear our testimonies one to another, to hear instruction, to mingle as brethren and sisters. We partake of that sociality which is so pleasant and so important a part of the culture of this great organization.

For more than a century these gatherings have originated in this historic Tabernacle. From this pulpit has gone forth the word of the Lord. Through the years the speakers have come on the stage and then moved on. The personalities are different. But the spirit is the same. It is that spirit referred to when the Lord said, "He that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together" (D&C 50:22).

This great Tabernacle seems to grow smaller each year. We now meet with far larger groups gathered under a single roof in some regional conferences. For instance, not long ago we were in the Tacoma Washington Region. There on a Sunday morning we had the privilege of speaking to 17,328 Latter-day Saints assembled together as one congregation. The acoustics were not as good as they are in this remarkable structure.

Broadcasting conference to the world

Of course there are far more of you participating through the wonders of the electronic media than there are here on Temple Square. Increasingly the Tabernacle is becoming a broadcast studio from which these conference services go by radio, television, cable, satellite, and other resources to many tens of thousands of you in various parts of the world. They are now seen across the

United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. They are carried to many areas of the British Isles and Europe. We hope that the time is not far distant when they can be carried live to the islands of the Pacific, to New Zealand and Australia, to the lands of Asia, to the nations of Mexico, Central America, and South America. As it is, however, more than half of the membership of the Church can, with a little effort, both see and hear me as I speak to you today.

Just below where I speak, in the basement of the Tabernacle, a large group of translators are at work so that each who wishes to hear may do so in his or her own language. I pay tribute to and express thanks for the tremendous services of these dedicated men and women who give so freely of their time and talents to this work of translation.

The kingdom of God—one great family

The little stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands is rolling forth to fill the earth (see D&C 65:2). What a wonderful thing it is to be part of this growing kingdom of our Lord. There are no political boundaries separating the hearts of the children of God, regardless of where they may live. We are all of one great family. We are sons and daughters of God. We are engaged in the service of His Beloved Son. He is our Redeemer and our Savior, and a testimony of this truth burns within our hearts. Each is entitled to such a testimony of this work. It is an individual knowledge of great fundamental truths that binds us together into what we call the church and kingdom of God.

And so we gather each six months to renew our faith, to enlarge our understanding of things divine, to express our love and respect one for another in this great and remarkable brotherhood and sisterhood which all of us know as The

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With you I look forward to the services in which we shall participate today and tomorrow, praying that the Lord will bless us, each one of us, with the companionship of His Holy Spirit.

I invoke the blessings of the Lord upon all who will speak, upon all who

will sing, upon all who will offer prayers, and in a very particular way, with great love and appreciation in my heart, upon all who will listen by the voice of the Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder M. Russell Ballard will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to be able to stand before you today. After undergoing heart-bypass surgery two months ago, I am grateful to be able to stand anywhere. I have felt the powerful faith and prayers of Church members exercised in my behalf these past months, for which I express my sincere appreciation. I have been greatly blessed and publicly express humble gratitude to my Heavenly Father.

Visiting the sites of the Restoration

During the early part of July, Sister Ballard and I had the opportunity to travel to Church historic sites in Palmyra, Kirtland, and Nauvoo with our seven children, their companions, and twenty of our grandchildren. Some people have suggested this may have contributed to my heart problems. I don't know about that, but I do know that our tour of these locations filled our souls with an ever greater love and respect for the Prophet Joseph Smith, for his family, and for the stalwarts who first embraced the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What an extraordinary experience it was to teach my family from the Doctrine and Covenants while standing on the very ground where many of those revelations and instructions were received.

Visiting those inspirational sites and immersing ourselves as a family in the

events of the Restoration reminded me again of the marvelous privilege we have to live in a day when we have such clear doctrinal understanding of our Heavenly Father's plan for the salvation and exaltation of His children. The clarity of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ and His restored church is precious, empowering knowledge for each one of us. I thank God that in these difficult days of moral decay and departure from sound values, we have no shortage of revealed truth to guide our lives.

Hyrum Smith's legacy of faithfulness

During the past several weeks of physical recovery, I have found myself with more time on my hands than I am accustomed to, with an unscheduled opportunity to think, to ponder, and to pray. I do not recommend the course of action that brought this gift of time to me, but I believe all of us would benefit from time to ponder and meditate. In the quiet moments of personal introspection, the Spirit can teach us much.

The Spirit has confirmed to me the important responsibility we have to see that the legacy of faith of our pioneer forefathers is never lost. We can derive great strength, particularly our youth, from understanding our Church history. As a descendant of Hyrum Smith, I feel a solemn obligation to ensure that the Church never forgets the significant ministry of this great leader. Recogniz-

ing that no one save Jesus only excels the singular accomplishment of the Prophet Joseph, I am stirred within my soul to remember and respect the valiant life and remarkable contributions of his older brother, the patriarch Hyrum.

In September of 1840, Joseph Smith Sr. gathered his family around him. This venerable patriarch was dying and wanted to leave his blessing on his beloved wife and children. Hyrum, the eldest living son, asked his father to intercede with heaven when he arrived there so the enemies of the Church "may not have so much power" over the Latter-day Saints. Father Smith then laid his hands upon Hyrum's head and blessed him to have "peace . . . sufficient . . . to accomplish the work which God has given you to do." Knowing of Hyrum's lifelong faithfulness, he concluded this last blessing with the promise that Hyrum would "be as firm as the pillars of heaven unto the end of [his] days."¹

This blessing identified Hyrum's strongest characteristic. More than anything else, he was "firm as the pillars of heaven." Throughout Hyrum's life, the forces of evil combined against him in an attempt to defeat him or at least to prompt him to stray off course.

Hyrum's relationship with Joseph

After his older brother Alvin's death in 1823, Hyrum bore significant responsibility in the Smith family. At the same time he assisted and served his brother, Joseph the Prophet, throughout the long and arduous process of the Restoration. Ultimately he joined Joseph and other martyrs of past gospel dispensations. His blood was shed as his final testimony to the world.

Through it all Hyrum stood firm. He knew the course his life would take, and he consciously chose to follow it. To Joseph, Hyrum became companion, protector, provider, confidant, and eventually joined him as a martyr. Unjust

persecution engulfed them throughout their lives. Although he was older, Hyrum recognized his brother's divine mantle. While he gave Joseph strong counsel on occasion, Hyrum always deferred to his younger brother.

Speaking to his brother, Joseph once said, "Brother Hyrum, what a faithful heart you have got! Oh may the Eternal Jehovah crown eternal blessings upon your head, as a reward for the care you have had for my soul! O how many are the sorrows we have shared together."²

On another occasion Joseph referred to his brother with these profound and tender words: "I love him with that love that is stronger than death."³

Hyrum's service to the Church

Hyrum gave unfailing service to the Church. In 1829 he was among a handful of individuals who were allowed to view the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and for the rest of his life he testified to the divine nature of the Book of Mormon as one of the Eight Witnesses who "had seen the plates with his eyes and handled them with his hands."⁴ He was among the first to be baptized in this gospel dispensation. At age thirty he was the oldest of the six men chosen in 1830 to formally organize The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1831 he stood before the Ohio conference and pledged "that all he had was the Lord's and he was ready to do his will continually."⁵ In 1833, when the Lord chastised the Church for delaying the start of the Kirtland Temple, Hyrum was the first to start digging its foundation. As chairman of the temple committee, Hyrum rallied the Church to perform the seemingly impossible task of building the Kirtland Temple when most Church members literally had nothing to give to the cause. A few years later he repeated this service with the building of the Nauvoo Temple.

Hyrum served in the Ohio bishopric, on the first high council, as patriarch, as a counselor in the First Presidency, and finally as one of only two men ever to hold the office of Assistant President of the Church.

Hyrum served many missions for the Church. During one mission, traveling from Kirtland to Indiana, he endured one of his greatest trials when his first wife, Jerusha, died soon after giving birth to his sixth child. Hyrum's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote that Jerusha's death "wrung our hearts with more than common grief. . . . She was a woman whom everybody loved."⁶

Although Hyrum was grieved, his faith was unshaken; his determination to serve Heavenly Father and his church never faltered. I believe God rewarded his faithfulness by bringing into his life one of the great women of Church history, Mary Fielding, whom he subsequently married. Together they built an extraordinary legacy of love and discipleship.

Clearly Hyrum Smith was one of the firm pillars of the Restoration. But sadly, many Church members know little about him except that he was martyred with his brother in Carthage Jail. That is significant, but he did far more. Indeed, Joseph Smith himself once suggested that his followers would do well to pattern their lives after Hyrum's.⁷ May I suggest a few examples from Hyrum's life that we may wish to follow.

Hyrum's dedicated scripture study

In 1829 when Joseph was finishing the translation of the Book of Mormon, Hyrum was anxious to begin spreading the gospel and building the Church. He asked Joseph to inquire of the Lord what he should do. In section 11 of the Doctrine and Covenants we read the Lord's response: "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word. . . .

Study my word which hath gone forth . . . , and also study my word . . . which is now translating."⁸

Hyrum's life is a witness to his obedience to this instruction. To the very last day of his life, he devoted himself to obtaining the word through study of the scriptures. In Carthage Jail he read and commented on extracts from the Book of Mormon. The scriptures were obviously part of Hyrum's being, and he turned to them during times when he needed comfort and strength the most.

Just think of the spiritual strength we could gain in our lives and how much more effective we would be as teachers, missionaries, and friends if we studied the scriptures regularly. I am sure we, like Hyrum, will be able to endure our greatest trials if we search the word of God as he did.

Hyrum's faithful, believing heart

The second great example from Hyrum's life that we may wish to follow occurred very early in the Restoration. According to Lucy Mack Smith, when young Joseph first told the rest of the family about his experience in the Sacred Grove, Hyrum and all the others received the message "joyfully." The family sat "in a circle, . . . giving the most profound attention to a boy . . . who had never read the Bible through in his life."⁹ In contrast to the reaction of Laman and Lemuel to their younger brother Nephi's divine calling and to the jealousy of the older brothers of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, there was no jealousy or animosity in Hyrum Smith. Instead, real faith was born in him of the simple and joyful response he felt to the spiritual truth of his brother's message. The Lord let him know in his heart what was right, and he followed Joseph—faithfully—for the rest of his life.

"I, the Lord, love [Hyrum]," the Savior revealed in section 124 of the Doctrine

and Covenants, "because of the integrity of his heart, and because he loveth that which is right before me."¹⁰

Faithful Hyrum had a believing heart; he did not have to see everything Joseph saw. For him, hearing the truth from Joseph's lips and feeling the spiritual promptings whispering that it was true were enough. Faith to believe was the source of Hyrum's spiritual strength and is the source of the spiritual strength of faithful members of the Church then and today. We do not need more members who question every detail; we need members who have felt with their hearts, who live close to the Spirit, and who follow its promptings joyfully. We need seeking hearts and minds that welcome gospel truths without argument or complaint and without requiring miraculous manifestation. Oh, how we are blessed when members respond joyfully to counsel from their bishops, stake presidents, quorum or auxiliary leaders, some of whom might be younger than they and less experienced. What great blessings we receive when we follow "that which is right" joyfully and not grudgingly.

Hyrum's service to others

The third example from the life of Hyrum was his selfless service to others. His mother commented on this quality, saying that he was "rather remarkable for his tenderness and sympathy."¹¹ When Joseph was afflicted with severe pain in his leg, Hyrum relieved his mother and sat beside Joseph almost twenty-four hours a day for more than a week.

Hyrum was the first to extend a hand of friendship to a visitor, the first to attempt to moderate a dispute, the first to forgive an enemy. The Prophet Joseph was known to say that "if Hyrum could not make peace between two who had fallen out, the angels themselves might not hope to accomplish the task."¹²

Do similar needs exist in the Church and in our families today? Are we sen-

sitive to the concerns of those who need special attention? Are we aware of families who are struggling spiritually or emotionally and who need our love, encouragement, and support? Hyrum's example of selfless service could be a powerful influence in the world today if enough of us choose to follow it.

Hyrum's response to trials

Another great example comes to us from the dark dungeon of Liberty Jail. Here Hyrum, Joseph, and a few others suffered exposure to cold, hunger, inhumane treatment, and the loneliness of isolation from friends. In this schoolhouse jail, Hyrum learned the lesson of patience in adversity and affliction. In the midst of this most severe trial, his primary concern was not for himself and his companions but for his family. In a letter to his wife, Hyrum wrote that the "greatest part of my trouble" was wondering how she and the family were doing. "When I think of your trouble my heart is weighed down with sorrow. . . . But what can I do? . . . Thy will be done O Lord."¹³

As I travel throughout the Church, I see members being tried in the crucible of affliction. I see members suffering from debilitating health concerns. I see husbands, wives, and parents living in trying circumstances they cannot change regarding their spouses or their children. Every one of us is faced at times with unpleasant situations, adversity, and affliction that we cannot change. Many circumstances can be addressed only with time, tears, prayer, and faith. For us, like Hyrum, peace may come only when we bring ourselves to say, "But what can I do? . . . Thy will be done O Lord."

Surely Joseph was inspired when he wrote of his brother Hyrum, "Thy name shall be written . . . for those who come after thee to look upon, that they may pattern after thy works."¹⁴ May we help keep the promise made to Hyrum in sec-

tion 124 of the Doctrine and Covenants that his "name [shall] be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever."¹⁵ His name most certainly will be honorably revered as we follow his example and "pattern after [his] works." May the memory of Hyrum Smith and all of our faithful forefathers never fade from our minds, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), p. 309.
2. *History of the Church*, 5:107–8.
3. *History of the Church*, 2:338.
4. Quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981), p. 159.
5. Quoted in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), p. 21.
6. *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 246.
7. See *History of the Church*, 5:108.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 11:21–22.
9. *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 82.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 124:15.
11. *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 55.
12. Osborne J. P. Widtsoe, "Hyrum Smith, Patriarch," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1911, p. 56.
13. Hyrum Smith letter to Mary Fielding Smith, 16 Mar. 1839, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
14. *History of the Church*, 5:108.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 124:96.

The chorus sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by the Mormon Youth Chorus singing "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

Elder Jack H. Goaslind of the Presidency of the Seventy will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Sister Janette Hales Beckham, general president of the Young Women.

Elder Jack H. Goaslind

Spiritual mountaintops

Recently I had the opportunity to attend meetings at Jackson Lake in the majestic Teton Mountains of Wyoming in the western part of the United States. The rugged mountain peaks and the breathtakingly beautiful scenery and the cool, crisp autumn air combined to lift and restore the spirits of almost every visitor. I must admit that the work I'd been sent there to do seemed a lot less like work than what most of us experience every day. The peaceful mountain setting had a restorative effect on me and others in attendance. The world's

problems seemed less insurmountable. The challenges I faced seemed much less threatening. I came away with a heightened outlook and a spirit brightened by new hope and enthusiasm.

Those mountain heights also stirred in me other reflections. I'd like to share some of those with you this morning.

The Lord has often used mountaintops as sanctuaries. In Old Testament times, when temples were not available the Lord used mountaintops as sacred places in which to reveal truths to His prophets. Likewise the New Testament and the Book of Mormon describe sacred mountaintops where God revealed

truths to His servants. Joseph Smith, kneeling in the Sacred Grove, was figuratively kneeling at the top of a great spiritual mountain.

Today the Lord provides us with ample space which, in a personal way, becomes our own spiritual mountaintop where we receive truth and inspiration. Searching the scriptures, for example, can answer many of the questions of our day by lifting our spirits to clarifying heights. Further, the world is dotted with holy temples which we may enter to receive instruction and inspiration and to perform sacred ordinances. Conferences such as this one, reports of the prophetic utterances of our beloved leaders, our own sacrament meetings and stake conferences—all provide rich, fulfilling opportunities to hear the truth and allow it to sink deep into our souls.

Testimony is a spiritual mountaintop

In our own lives, in our daily workaday world, we can create our own "mountaintop experience" so unique and personal that I wonder why more of us do not readily do so. The spiritual mountaintop of which I speak is the development and refining of a testimony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Just as we can stand on the top of any great mountain and experience an awe-inspiring panorama, I believe we can stand in our own places and experience overwhelming awe in knowing that the Savior, in an act of love which defies mortal understanding, gave His life in taking upon himself our pain and suffering.

It seems to me that the power of a testimony of Jesus Christ is one of the great untapped sources of direction in our lives today. I am convinced that each of us, however good, loyal, or dedicated we try to be in the gospel and in the Church, could do so much more if we did it with the power and influence of an unwavering faith in the Lord. Let me give you an example.

Link teaching to a testimony of Jesus

I believe most parents within the sound of my voice try to teach their children right from wrong, to be honest, to respect others and their property, to live morally clean lives, and to love their families. They work hard to teach them the importance of the saving ordinances, such as baptism for the remission of sins. They want their sons to be ordained to the priesthood at the appropriate age. They teach their children to know that to be married in the right place to the right person at the right time by the right authority is critical to exaltation.

These important lessons, and others like them so crucial to every Latter-day Saint, are the hallmarks of everything we believe and hold dear. If these lessons are learned through the Spirit, taught under the strong influence of a strong testimony of the atonement of the Savior, they are taught and learned in an atmosphere of love and trust that goes a long way in ensuring they will be retained. As the scripture teaches, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The belief, and finally conviction, that Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, the Redeemer of Israel—even our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ—gave His life in a selfless sacrifice so that we may have immortality and eternal life bring into focus every other teaching that we impart to our children and others for whom we have a stewardship.

Sometimes I think that we fear too much to link all of our teaching to the foundation of gospel truths. Too often, perhaps, we teach children to obey a law or a principle because our family expects that obedience. They might observe another truth in order to please a neighbor or a bishop, and another for yet some other reason. When we teach an eternal truth to our children and don't explain it in the context of a firm testimony of the Savior, we miss the power of the ex-

ample of the greatest teacher the world has ever known.

Climb above comfortable plateaus

Likewise many of us have attained a level of obedience in which we consistently keep the letter of the law; we commit no grievous sins. As we look about us, we see that we do no worse than the next family, and we feel satisfied, comfortable. We are compatible with others on our plateau partway up the mountain. We like this scenic ledge where we have all the "do's and don'ts" under control. We need to learn—and then teach—that we are obedient to the laws and principles of the gospel because of our belief, our knowledge, our testimony, and our faith in Jesus Christ. Nephi, who reports in the scriptures that his "soul delighteth in plainness" (2 Nephi 25:4), reminds us in the twenty-fifth chapter of 2 Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (v. 26).

Perhaps knowing that it would be difficult at times for us to place our faith so fully in our testimonies of the Savior, President Harold B. Lee admonished us, "Walk to the edge of the light, and perhaps a few steps into the darkness, and you will find that the light will appear and move ahead of you" (quoted in Lucile C. Tate, *Boyd K. Packer: A Watchman on the Tower* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], p. 138).

It is in the development of our testimonies, in the moving even partway up the mountain and out of our comfort zones, that I think we begin to approach our own personal spiritual mountaintop where we can receive inspiration and truth as never before. It is there, just as I experienced in the tops of the Tetons, that we can think more clearly, see things more as they really are, and un-

derstand truth in a light that is pure and fresh. There, with the Holy Ghost to guide and influence us, we begin to understand, know how to teach, or bless the lives of others with new meaning and increased perception.

Know, remember, and serve Christ

If I could have but just one wish fulfilled this morning, I would plant deep in your hearts the unwavering remembrance of Jesus Christ. In our day President Howard W. Hunter inspired all of us by saying, "We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 84; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 64).

Perhaps what President Hunter asked us to do in those challenging words was the same thing that the prophet Alma taught us about finding a mighty change in our hearts. Alma taught the members of the Church in Zarahemla that they needed to lift their hearts to a higher spiritual plane. He spoke of the need to trust God, and he told them how important it was to exercise faith. And then he asked this critical question which we need to ask ourselves today: "And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26).

Anchor goodness in faith in Christ

Brothers and sisters, our goodness—our every righteous endeavor, our good works, our obedience, and our efforts to bless others—must be anchored in and driven by our faith in Christ, our testimonies of his mission and sacrifice, and our willingness to move off our comfortable plateaus. Until we find ways to strengthen, increase, and magnify our

testimonies of Jesus Christ and the effect of the Atonement in our lives, we will be unable to answer Alma's question in the affirmative.

Satan wants us to fail to reach that mountaintop that will allow us to develop a testimony so powerful that he will be unable to influence us. His work is to thwart our efforts, but the Lord has counseled us, "Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail" (D&C 6:34).

We have every confidence that earth and hell will not overtake you, but it will require that you move from your current plateaus and climb to higher ground.

Help children know and love the Savior

May I close with the powerful words of our beloved prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, and I quote:

"Go forward with your lives. The best lies ahead. . . . Bring into the lives of our young people something more of spirituality. . . . Cultivate in the heart of every boy [and girl] a sense of [their] re-

lationship to the Lord as [they become] acquainted with the Savior of the world by knowing some elements of the atonement of the Redeemer through which eternal life is made possible for each of us" (in *Church News*, 2 Sept. 1995, p. 2).

God bless you, parents. We love you. We know it is not easy to do what you are doing. We know that every new day brings challenges and trials that often seem insurmountable. May you find through increased faith and reliance upon the Lord renewed strength, vigor, and resilience in teaching and blessing the lives of those in your parental stewardship. May you find in the counsel given us by President Howard W. Hunter, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and all who have stood to bear unfailing testimony of Jesus Christ that only through love and devotion to the teachings of Him of whom we testify, and through the blessings of His atonement in our behalf, may we teach with the power to bless and save our families in the kingdom of God. Of this I testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Janette Hales Beckham

At one time a mother said, "I wish they would just lock all the youth in the temple until they turn twenty-one." A father said, "I feel totally powerless in my own home. We are out of control." What force or power could soften the human cry for greater security, orderliness, control, even peace?

Power to calm outside fears

My first memories of a need for power came when my family moved the year I began third grade. I started figuring out more about friends and other people's families. As my new friends

talked to kids in the extended neighborhood, we sized up assets and numbers—who had shade trees you could sit in or chicken coops you could climb on. Besides whose dad was the strongest, I noticed many of the kids were older than I. Luckily I had two big sisters with lots of friends. In fact I once said I could call out the whole high school if needed. I felt I had the needed personal power for safety and self-preservation.

My eight-year-old world was enlarging. So was the need for the skills that help one cope in this civilized world. I started appreciating the safety one gets from size, numbers, resources. Our use

of what I call personal or political power begins early. Most children learn about size first. "If you don't stop that, I'll call Mom." "When Dad comes home, you'll be in big trouble." Resources can supplement our need for size. A toy becomes a stick. What begins as a snowman becomes a fortress. The world was at war in those days, but I was a third-grader. The physical danger I feared was the boy with a wooden gun that shot rubber rings taken from fruit jars. His target was girls' legs. Friends told me you could give the boy bottle rings and he wouldn't hit you, but adding to his arsenal seemed like a traitorous thing to do, and I doubted you could trust a commitment from a bully. I think a teacher eventually took his gun. In my world I appreciated people who had power, like teachers and parents, especially if they had fair rules.

Inner power of goodness and love

That same year the community seemed to rejoice with our family when my mother gave birth to her only son after four daughters. My dad was an only son, and now he had someone to carry on his name. Within months it was obvious that Tommy was severely handicapped. A force that was just the opposite of my outside world started to be felt inside. There seemed to develop a new dimension of love, tenderness, compassion. I watched my mother and dad make adjustments in lifestyle to lovingly care for a child who in his five and one-half years never learned to sit or speak but who warmed an entire room with his smile. The whole town seemed more gentle, interested, concerned. My outside fears were diminished. I felt securely attached because my mother and brother were there. My parents were home at night. Our home seemed more warm, full. There was a different power. It seemed to grow from the inside. It felt more permanent, unlike the temporary power I felt with my friends. It was calm and

peaceful—the power of goodness, the power of love.

A family learns the power of love

There *is* a power in goodness that is often learned in families. There is a void when it is lacking. I know one family that left what they described as "the good life" in a desire to *do good*. They agreed on a noble purpose that would take them to the Philippines for a year. The mother of this family reported, "We were flabbergasted it was so hard." Without the normal routine and conveniences of home, she said, "we were just the same old ornery people." Then they set a new routine—exercise at 5:30 A.M., 6:30 scripture study, then breakfast and school. Each afternoon they visited orphanages to play with the children.

Gradually the family started to notice a change—new levels of patience, gratitude, and respect. They started to talk to each other—to *really* talk and to *really* listen. The mother stated, "I will never forget the learning that took place for me and my family the day they brought a five-month-old baby into the orphanage whose tongue had been cut and an eye poked out." When they learned the mother, a beggar, had injured her own child, it gave a new dimension to the social studies lesson they had discussed at home. A new level of compassion started to develop—greater reverence for the sanctity of life. This family put their "trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good" (D&C 11:12), and gradually they started to experience the power to become changed.

The powers of heaven and of priesthood

The powers of heaven are available to everyone through righteousness. Mormon teaches that "every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the *power* and gift of Christ" (Moroni 7:16; *italics added*).

Revelation concerning power was given to Joseph Smith when political power had turned against him and he was a prisoner in Liberty Jail. His first plea to the Lord was for help to avenge his enemies. His prayer: "Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies" (D&C 121:5). Our Father in Heaven responded with a greater blessing: "My son, peace be unto thy soul" (v. 7). Then He made a promise if Joseph would endure and be faithful: "God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (v. 8).

It was in this prison setting that God taught Joseph Smith about priesthood power. "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41). Priesthood power is used to minister, to preach, to teach, to baptize, to ordain, to heal, to seal, to restore, to bless, to prophesy, to testify, to do good.

Political power, on the other hand, can be used as a force for good, or it may be a force for evil. It is always temporary. We all have political power. We each need it. We should *use* it for *good*. Without proper exercise of this power, we might lose our freedom. Churches might cease to exist. Of course we need rules. We need laws, but we must remember that the scriptures tell us "the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness" (D&C 121:36).

The power of a mother's goodness

A faithful member shared her testimony of how the *power* of goodness influenced her life. She writes:

"Until I was about eight years old, I was oblivious to the fact that my mother had serious health problems—later diagnosed as multiple sclerosis. When I was a first-year Beehive, I awoke one May morning to find that my mother was

paralyzed from the neck down. She was already blind."

Confined to her bed, this courageous woman became the hub of the household. Her daughter wrote:

"One day it fell upon me to clean the oven, a chore I approached with self-pity and much complaining. I went into her bedroom to whine a little and realized that Mom was crying. She said, 'Do you know how much I would give to be able to get up and scrub that oven?' I gained a different perspective on the nature of work. To this day I think of that experience every time the oven needs cleaning."

She continues: "An unusual blessing came to me in having my mother available. She listened patiently to my early-adolescent concerns and questions. She made me feel like the most important and interesting person in the world. She was *always* HOME—attentive, interested, and always available."

Her mother died the spring of her senior year. She relates:

"One of the hardest moments in my young life was the day I returned home from school to an empty house and walked down that long hallway to her bedroom. My built-in counselor and confidante was no longer there, but she had given me those eternal, intangible gifts of love, wisdom, and acceptance. I will be forever grateful for her goodness."

This strong woman, though physically helpless, had the *power* to love, to motivate, to inspire, to perpetuate righteousness, to do good.

Seek the power of righteousness

My plea for each of us is to recognize that God has given each of us power—the power to act, to choose, to serve, to love, and to accomplish *much good*. Perhaps it is time to take control of ourselves. Our prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, has said, "Be faithful. . . . Do good." He

has told us: "We have nothing to fear. God is at the helm. . . . He will shower down blessings upon those who walk in obedience to His commandments" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 95; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 71). It is my prayer that we will seek the power of righteousness in our lives by following the counsel of the living prophet and by living the teachings of our Savior, Jesus Christ, in His name, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Jack H Goasland of the Presidency of the Seventy has spoken to us,

followed by Sister Janette Hales Beckham, general president of the Young Women.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Do What Is Right," following which we shall hear from Elder W. Craig Zwick and then Elder Bruce D. Porter, who were sustained as new members of the Seventy during our April conference.

The chorus and congregation sang "Do What Is Right."

Elder W. Craig Zwick

Encircled in the Savior's love

My heart trembles with deep humility as I occupy this sacred spot for the first time. I know with full assurance that President Hinckley's voice and thoughts represent the Savior's desires for each of us.

On a beautiful summer morning our family attended the Special Olympics to watch our son Scott participate. The Special Olympics are held each year to allow people with disabilities to enjoy friendly competition. We observed that as the runners were taking their positions for the fifty-yard dash, they were being encouraged by special friends affectionately known as huggers. Seconds before the start of the race, these huggers took their places at the finish line of the race. It didn't matter who crossed the finish line first. What did matter was that every runner completed the race and that every runner received a congratulatory hug. Both the courageous runners and the caring huggers taught important principles of truth.

The Lord spoke in plainness, "Be faithful and diligent in keeping the com-

mandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love" (D&C 6:20). We all want to feel the comfort of the Savior's embrace.

Reach out to those with disabilities

During His ministry the Savior, with great compassion, saw beyond the imperfections of body and mind and looked upon the heart. Our discipleship includes the sacred responsibility to follow His example of reaching out and loving those with disabilities. Valiant disciples seek meaningful ways to stretch their souls in service and love to others.

Elder Richard G. Scott's counsel is precise: "You become an instrument through which the Lord can bless another. The Spirit will let you feel the Savior's concern and interest, then the warmth and strength of His love" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 9; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 9).

Our task, facilitated by prayer, is to recognize even the slight limitations of each person who may be suffering pain or discouragement. It may be a minor learning disability, dyslexia, or a slight

hearing impairment. Without our help, they may be unable to partake of the Savior's goodness or enjoy the fulness of life.

Each person wants to feel safe in what is sometimes a very cruel, competitive world. Everyone is of great worth because each is a spirit child of God.

Include those with disabilities

Mary, a young girl with mental disabilities and not a member of the Church, was limited, but she wanted very much to be included. Sensitive to her needs, several young women invited her to participate in the ward road show. Her family was invited to the performance. Mary's father wanted to know more about a church whose people cared enough about his daughter to include her. The whole family embraced the gospel and were baptized.

Thank you to each thoughtful friend, teacher, bishop, and all who ensure that no one feels alone or out of place. There is an ever-present need for meaningful involvement. We are all enriched and enhanced in the process.

Contributions of those with disabilities

Sister Navarro lives in a small village in southern Chile. Her body is afflicted with arthritis, and she suffers significant pain as she walks with the help of a cane. Every Sunday for nineteen years she has taken the hand of her daughter who is mentally disabled and, aided by a cane, shuffled two miles to attend church. Her calling as chorister in the Relief Society means everything to dear Sister Navarro. Her willingness to reach out to others is like a magnet for others to be of help to her disabled daughter.

The Savior in His infinite goodness allows all to enjoy. "All men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden" (2 Nephi 26:28).

Each person has unique gifts, and each needs to contribute as well as receive.

Jamie Wheeler is an exceptional sixteen-year-old. He was born with Down syndrome. Jamie has a calling in the ward and helps the bishop in other meaningful ways. He participates actively in the Boy Scout program. Truly he contributes and also receives genuine love and appreciation.

Learning from those with disabilities

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 354).

Our lives are blessed as we learn lessons from trusted friends whose disabilities and humility invite the Spirit. They teach us a new dimension of faith, courage, patience, love, and individual worth.

Four young men with severe disabilities work in the São Paulo Temple. Each has a different challenge, but each is blessing the lives of thousands as they contribute to the sweet spirit within this beautiful temple. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10).

My soul is stirring with deep appreciation and love for our oldest son, Scott, mentally disabled from birth. His courage and love have allowed many friends and each member of our family to feel through the Spirit "the Savior's concern and interest, then the warmth and strength of His love" (Richard G. Scott, in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, p. 9; or *Ensign*, May 1994, p. 9). I am grateful for my eternal companion, Jan, whose faith and tender love for each of our children has made our home a peaceful setting. She truly looks for ways to make each child of God feel comforted.

The Savior's compassion

Ponder in your hearts the feelings of the Savior as He expresses His love for each child of God:

"They were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

"And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

"Have ye any that are . . . afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you. . . .

" . . . I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you" (3 Nephi 17:5-8).

I pray that our faith may be sufficient for each of us to feel encircled in the arms of our Savior's love. I know that our Savior lives and that He intimately knows each of us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Bruce D. Porter

Our similarities to the prodigal son

The parable of the prodigal son is a parable of us all. It reminds us that we are, in some measure, prodigal sons and daughters of our Father in Heaven. For, as the Apostle Paul wrote, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Like the errant son of the Savior's parable, we have come to "a far country" (Luke 15:13) separated from our pre-mortal home. Like the prodigal, we share in a divine inheritance, but by our sins we squander a portion thereof and experience a "mighty famine" (v. 14) of spirit. Like him, we learn through painful experience that worldly pleasures and pursuits are of no more worth than the husks of corn that swine eat. We yearn to be reconciled with our Father and return to His home.

How long we have wandered
As strangers in sin,
And cried in the desert for thee!
[*"Redeemer of Israel," Hymns, no. 6*]

The Father's Eldest Son redeemed us

In the parable of the prodigal son, only the eldest son remains true to his father; in his own words, "Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment"

(Luke 15:29). Similarly, in the plan of salvation the Firstborn of the Father is sinless and without spot. Yet there is a vital difference. In the parable, the eldest son is jealous of the attention paid to the returning prodigal. In the plan of salvation, however, the Eldest Son *makes possible* the return of the prodigals.

The Father sends Him forth to redeem His sons and daughters from bondage. The Eldest is filled with compassion. "I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them" (Ezekiel 37:23). He journeys the long distance to find and bring home the prodigal ones. And there He finds us weary, hungry, and downtrodden. He feeds us and gives us drink. He lives among us and shares our burdens. Then, in a final act of supreme love, the Eldest Son takes of His own wealth and, one by one, He ransoms us. In order to pay the fulness of our debt, He is compelled to sacrifice His own fortune, yea, all that He has, every whit.

There are those who refuse the proffered ransom. Chained by pride, they prefer bondage to repentance. But those who accept of His offering and forsake their errant ways receive healing at His hands and liberty as His gift. These He leads back to the Father with songs of everlasting joy.

I testify that the Eldest Son of our Father in Heaven did redeem us from the bondage of sin. We are a purchased people. In the words of Paul, "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 7:23). In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Firstborn of the Father "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6); He bore "our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). At Golgotha, at the hands of men for whose very sins He had atoned, He "poured out his soul unto death" (v. 12), freely relinquishing His life as He overcame the world.

The Savior's sacrifices

In the premortal realm He had been the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Creator of the earth, the great I AM. From these exalted heights He descended, coming to earth in the most humble of circumstances that He might be no stranger to our sorrows. Instead of worldly station, He chose to be born in a lowly stable and live the simple life of a carpenter. He grew up in an obscure village in a despised precinct of Palestine. He made himself of no reputation, and was "a root out of a dry ground," having "no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2).

He might have had political power and honor; He chose instead to be a healer and a teacher. He might have won the favor of His people by freeing them from Roman oppression; instead, He saved them from their sins and was rejected by His own. He sacrificed the glory of Galilee to experience the humiliation and trial of Jerusalem. Then, in a most literal way, the Lord Jesus Christ paid the utmost demands of our ransom as He bore "the pain of all men" (D&C 18:11).

"And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him,

and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (1 Nephi 19:9).

Redeemer of Israel

A few years ago I visited Jerusalem shortly before Christmas. The streets were cold and dreary; there was political tension in the air. Yet peace filled my heart to know that this was the city He loved so much, the very place of His eternal sacrifice; to know that here had lived He who was the Savior of all mankind.

I returned to the United States late on a Saturday evening. When the Sabbath dawned, my alarm awoke me to these words from "O Holy Night":

The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.
[Adolphe Adam, in *Recreational Songs*
(Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), pp. 142-44]

And I began to weep as I contemplated the perfect life and glorious sacrifice of the Redeemer of Israel—He who was born the friend of the lowly and hope of the meek.

I bear testimony that the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price of our sins upon condition of repentance. He is the Firstborn of the Father. He is the Holy One of Israel. He is the firstfruits of the Resurrection. I testify that He lives. I testify that He is in very deed "our only delight, . . . our King, our Deliv'rer, our all!" (*Hymns*, no. 6). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Zwick and Brother Porter of the Seventy.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder Richard G. Scott

When the Lord answers no

It is so hard when sincere prayer about something we desire very much is not answered the way we want. It is especially difficult when the Lord answers *no* to that which is worthy and would give us great joy and happiness. Whether it be overcoming illness or loneliness, recovery of a wayward child, coping with a handicap, or seeking continuing life for a dear one who is slipping away, it seems so reasonable and so consistent with our happiness to have a favorable answer. It is hard to understand why our exercise of deep and sincere faith from an obedient life does not bring the desired result.

No one wants adversity. Trials, disappointments, sadness, and heartache come to us from two basically different sources. Those who transgress the laws of God will always have those challenges. The other reason for adversity is to accomplish the Lord's own purposes in our life that we may receive the refinement that comes from testing. It is vitally important for each of us to identify from which of these two sources come our trials and challenges, for the corrective action is very different.

Adversity from transgression

If you are suffering the disheartening effects of transgression, please recognize that the only path to permanent relief from sadness is sincere repentance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Realize your full dependence on the Lord and your need to align your life with His teachings. There is really no other way to get lasting healing and peace. Postponing humble repentance will delay or prevent your receiving relief. Admit to yourself your mistakes and seek help now. Your bishop is a friend with keys of authority to help you find peace of mind and contentment. The way will be opened for

you to have strength to repent and be forgiven.

Adversity to accomplish the Lord's purposes

Now may I share some suggestions with you who face the second source of adversity, the testing that a wise Heavenly Father determines is needed even when you are living a worthy, righteous life and are obedient to His commandments.

Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see Proverbs 3:11–12). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion which polish you for your everlasting benefit. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain.

When you face adversity, you can be led to ask many questions. Some serve a useful purpose; others do not. To ask, Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this now? What have I done to cause this? will lead you into blind alleys. It really does no good to ask questions that reflect opposition to the will of God. Rather ask, What am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? What am I to change? Whom am I to help? How can I remember my many blessings in times of trial? Willing sacrifice of deeply held personal desires in favor of the will of God is very hard to do. Yet when you pray with real conviction, "Please let me know Thy will" and "May Thy will be done," you are in the strongest position to receive the maximum help from your loving Father.

Trust in the Lord

This life is an experience in profound trust—trust in Jesus Christ, trust in His teachings, trust in our capacity as led by the Holy Spirit to obey those teachings for happiness now and for a purposeful, supremely happy eternal existence. To trust means to obey willingly without knowing the end from the beginning (see Proverbs 3:5–7). To produce fruit, your trust in the Lord must be more powerful and enduring than your confidence in your own personal feelings and experience.

To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it. We are like infants in our understanding of eternal matters and their impact on us here in mortality. Yet at times we act as if we knew it all. When you pass through trials for His purposes, as you trust Him, exercise faith in Him, He will help you. That support will generally come step by step, a portion at a time. While you are passing through each phase, the pain and difficulty that come from being enlarged will continue. If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love.

The Savior's example in adversity

As in all things, the Master is our perfect example. Who could have asked with more perfect faith, greater obedience, or more complete understanding than did He when He asked His Father in Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"

(Matthew 26:39). Later He pled twice again, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (v. 42; see also v. 44).

How grateful I am personally that our Savior taught we should conclude our most urgent, deeply felt prayers, when we ask for that which is of utmost importance to us, with "Thy will be done" (v. 42). Your willingness to accept the will of the Father will not change what, in His wisdom, He has chosen to do. However, it will certainly change the effect of those decisions on you personally. That evidence of the proper exercise of agency allows His decisions to produce far greater blessings in your life. I have found that because of our Father's desire for us to grow, He may give us gentle, almost imperceptible promptings that, if we are willing to accept without complaint, He will enlarge to become a very clear indication of His will. This enlightenment comes because of our faith and our willingness to do what He asks even though we would desire something else.

The Lord gives what we need

Our Father in Heaven has invited you to express your needs, hopes, and desires unto Him. That should not be done in a spirit of negotiation, but rather as a willingness to obey His will no matter what direction that takes. His invitation "Ask, and ye shall receive" (3 Nephi 27:29) does not ensure that you will get what you *want*. It does guarantee that, if worthy, you will get what you *need*, as judged by a Father who loves you perfectly, who wants your eternal happiness even more than you do.

I testify that when the Lord closes one important door in your life, He shows His continuing love and compassion by opening many other compensating doors through your exercise of faith. He will place in your path packets of spiritual sunlight to brighten your way.

They often come after the trial has been the greatest, as evidence of the compassion and love of an all-knowing Father. They point the way to greater happiness and more understanding and strengthen your determination to accept and be obedient to His will.

True happiness is centered in Christ

It is a singularly marvelous blessing to have faith in the Savior and a testimony of His teachings. So few in the world have that brilliant light to guide them. The fulness of the restored gospel gives perspective, purpose, and understanding. It allows us to face what otherwise appear to be unjust, unfair, unreasonable challenges in life. Learn those helpful truths by pondering the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Try to understand those teachings not only with your mind but also with your heart.

True enduring happiness with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the most challenging difficulties comes from a life centered in Jesus Christ. Obedience to His teachings provides a sure foundation upon which to build. That takes effort. There is no guarantee of overnight results, but there is absolute assurance that, in the Lord's time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and emptiness will be filled.

Finding peace during adversity

Recently a great leader, suffering from physical handicaps that come with advancing age, said, "I am glad I have what I have." It is wisdom to open the windows of happiness by recognizing your abundant blessings.

Don't let the workings of adversity totally absorb your life. Try to understand what you can. Act where you are able; then let the matter rest with the Lord for a period while you give to others in worthy ways before you take on appropriate concern again.

Please learn that as you wrestle with a challenge and feel sadness because of it, you can simultaneously have peace and rejoicing. Yes, pain, disappointment, frustration, and anguish can be temporary scenes played out on the stage of life. Behind them there can be a background of peace and the positive assurance that a loving Father will keep His promises. You can qualify for those promises by a determination to accept His will, by understanding the plan of happiness, by receiving all of the ordinances, and by keeping the covenants made to assure their fulfillment.

The Lord is preparing you for exaltation

The Lord's plan is to exalt you to live with Him and be greatly blessed. The rate at which you qualify is generally set by your capacity to mature, to grow, to love, and to give of yourself. He is preparing you to be a god. You cannot understand fully what that means, yet He knows. As you trust Him, seek and follow His will, you will receive blessings that your finite mind cannot understand here on earth. Your Father in Heaven and His Holy Son know better than you what brings happiness. They have given you the plan of happiness. As you understand and follow it, happiness will be your blessing. As you willingly obey, receive, and honor the ordinances and covenants of that holy plan, you can have the greatest measure of satisfaction in this life, yes, even times of overpowering happiness. You will prepare yourself for an eternity of glorious life with your loved ones who qualify for that kingdom.

I know the principles that we have discussed are true. They have been tested in the crucible of personal experience. To recognize the hand of the Lord in your life and to accept His will without complaint is a beginning. That decision does not immediately eliminate the struggles that will come for your growth. But I witness that it is the best way there is for you

to find strength and understanding. It will free you from the dead ends of your own reasoning. It will allow your life to become a productive, meaningful experience when otherwise you may not know how to go on (see D&C 24:8).

I testify that you have a Heavenly Father who loves you. I witness that the Savior gave His life for your happiness. I know Him. He understands your every need. I positively know that as you accept Their will without complaint, They will bless and sustain you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Boyd K. Packer

The brilliant morning of forgiveness

In April of 1847, Brigham Young led the first company of pioneers out of Winter Quarters. At that same time, 1,600 miles to the west the pathetic survivors of the Donner Party straggled down the slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains into the Sacramento Valley.

They had spent the ferocious winter trapped in the snowdrifts below the summit. That any survived the days and weeks and months of starvation and indescribable suffering is almost beyond belief.

Among them was fifteen-year-old John Breen. On the night of April 24 he walked into Johnson's Ranch. Years later John wrote:

"It was long after dark when we got to Johnson's Ranch, so the first time I saw it was early in the morning. The weather was fine, the ground was covered with green grass, the birds were singing from the tops of the trees, and the journey was over. I could scarcely believe that I was alive.

"The scene that I saw that morning seems to be photographed on my mind. Most of the incidents are gone from memory, but I can always see the camp near Johnson's Ranch."¹

The chorus sang "True to the Faith."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Elder Richard G. Scott has just spoken to us, followed by the chorus singing "True to the Faith."

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will now be our concluding speaker for this session.

At first I was very puzzled by his statement that "most of the incidents are gone from memory." How could long months of incredible suffering and sorrow ever be gone from his mind? How could that brutal dark winter be replaced with one brilliant morning?

On further reflection I decided it was not puzzling at all. I have seen something similar happen to people I have known. I have seen some who have spent a long winter of guilt and spiritual starvation emerge into the morning of forgiveness. When morning came, they learned this:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."²

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."³

"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."⁴

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."⁵

Alma feels the joy of forgiveness

When the prophet Alma was young, he spent such a time "racked," as he said, "with eternal torment, [his] soul . . . harrowed up to the greatest degree."⁶

He even thought, "*Oh, . . . that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body.*"⁷

But his mind caught hold of a thought. When he nurtured the thought and acted upon it, the morning of forgiveness came, and he said:

"I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

"And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!"⁸

The promise of complete forgiveness

Letters come from those who have made tragic mistakes. They ask, "Can I ever be forgiven?"

The answer is *yes!*

The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." That is, Isaiah continued, "if ye be willing and obedient."⁹

Even that grace of God promised in the scriptures comes only "after all we can do."¹⁰

You may tell yourself that your transgressions are not spiritually illegal. That will not work; neither will rebellion, nor anger, nor joking about them. You cannot do that. And you don't have to do it.

Repentance: the way back

There is a way back. It will not help if, out of tender regard for your feelings, I avoid telling you about the hard part.

John Breen did not come to that morning at Johnson's Ranch simply by desiring it. He wallowed and clawed his way up over the pass, suffering every step of the way. But once he knew he would survive and the suffering would end, surely he did not complain at the ordeal. And he had help all the way down. He was with rescuers.

When an offense is minor, so simple a thing as an apology will satisfy the law. Most mistakes can be settled between us and the Lord, and that should be done speedily.¹¹ It requires a confession to Him, and whatever obvious repairs need to be made.

With sincere repentance as a pattern in our lives, measured by our willingness to "confess them and forsake them,"¹² the Lord has promised that we may "always retain a remission of [our] sins."¹³

Alma bluntly told his wayward son that "repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment."¹⁴

The punishment may, for the most part, consist of the torment we inflict upon ourselves. It may be the loss of privilege or progress.¹⁵ (For further information, see additional text in this endnote.) We are punished *by* our sins, if not *for* them.

There are some transgressions which require a discipline which will bring about the relief that comes with the morning of forgiveness. If your mistakes have been grievous ones, go to your bishop. Like the rescuers who brought John Breen down from the mountaintops, bishops can guide you through the steps required to obtain forgiveness insofar as the Church is concerned. Each one of us must work out individually forgiveness from the Lord.

The need to make restitution

To earn forgiveness, one must make restitution. That means you give back what you have taken or ease the pain of those you have injured.

But sometimes you *cannot* give back what you have taken because you don't have it to give. If you have caused others to suffer unbearably—defiled someone's virtue, for example—it is not within your power to give it back.

There are times you cannot mend that which you have broken. Perhaps the offense was long ago, or the injured refused your penance. Perhaps the damage was so severe that you cannot fix it no matter how desperately you want to.

Your repentance cannot be accepted unless there is a restitution. If you cannot undo what you have done, you are trapped. It is easy to understand how helpless and hopeless you then feel and why you might want to give up, just as Alma did.

The thought that rescued Alma, when he acted upon it, is this: Restoring what you cannot restore, healing the wound you cannot heal, fixing that which you broke and you cannot fix is the very purpose of the atonement of Christ.

When your desire is firm and you are willing to pay the "uttermost farthing,"¹⁶ the law of restitution is suspended. Your obligation is transferred to the Lord. He will settle your accounts.

Comforting knowledge

I repeat, save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the atonement of Christ.

How all can be repaired, we do not know. It may not all be accomplished in this life. We know from visions and visitations that the servants of the Lord continue the work of redemption beyond the veil.¹⁷

This knowledge should be as comforting to the innocent as it is to the guilty. I am thinking of parents who suffer un-

bearably for the mistakes of their wayward children and are losing hope.

We cannot condone unworthy conduct

Some members wonder why their priesthood leaders will not accept them just as they are and simply comfort them in what they call pure Christian love.

Pure Christian love, the love of Christ, does not presuppose approval of all conduct. Surely the ordinary experiences of parenthood teach that one can be consumed with love for another and yet be unable to approve unworthy conduct.

We cannot, as a church, approve unworthy conduct or accept into full fellowship individuals who live or who teach standards that are grossly in violation of that which the Lord requires of Latter-day Saints.

If we, out of sympathy, should approve unworthy conduct, it might give present comfort to someone but would not ultimately contribute to that person's happiness.¹⁸

In the most tender of sermons in the revelations on kindness and long-suffering, on meekness, gentleness, on love unfeigned, the Lord instructs us to reprove "betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then [show] forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved."¹⁹

Seek relief now

The Lord provides ways to pay our debts to Him. In one sense we ourselves may participate in an atonement. When we are willing to restore to others that which we have not taken, or heal wounds that we did not inflict, or pay a debt that we did not incur, we are emulating His part in the Atonement.

So many live with accusing guilt when relief is ever at hand. So many are like the immigrant woman who skimmed and saved and deprived herself until, by

selling all of her possessions, she bought a steerage-class ticket to America.

She rationed out the meager provisions she was able to bring with her. Even so, they were gone early in the voyage. When others went for their meals, she stayed below deck—determined to suffer through it. Finally, on the last day, she must, she thought, afford one meal to give her strength for the journey yet ahead. When she asked what the meal would cost, she was told that all of the meals had been included in the price of her ticket.

Never give up hope

That great morning of forgiveness may not come at once. Do not give up if at first you fail. Often the most difficult part of repentance is to forgive yourself. Discouragement is part of that test. Do not give up. That brilliant morning will come.

Then “the peace of God, which passeth . . . understanding” comes into your life once again.²⁰ Then you, like Him, will remember your sins no more. How will you know? You will know!²¹

Some years ago I was in Washington, D.C., with President Harold B. Lee. Early one morning he called me to come into his hotel room. He was sitting in his robe reading *Gospel Doctrine*, by President Joseph F. Smith, and he said, “Listen to this!

“‘Jesus had not finished his work when his body was slain, neither did he finish it after his resurrection from the dead; although he had accomplished the purpose for which he then came to the earth, he had not fulfilled all his work. And when will he? Not until he has redeemed and saved every son and daughter of our father Adam that have been or ever will be born upon this earth to the end of time, except the sons of perdition. That is his mission. We will not finish *our* work until we have saved ourselves, and then not until we shall have saved all

depending upon us; for we are to become saviors upon Mount Zion, as well as Christ. We are called to this mission.’”²²

“There is never a time,” the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “when the spirit is too old to approach God. *All are within the reach of pardoning mercy, who have not committed the unpardonable sin.*”²³

And so we pray, and we fast, and we plead, and we implore. We love those who wander, and we never give up hope.

I bear witness of Christ and of the power of His atonement. And I know that “his anger kindleth against the wicked; they repent, and in a moment it is turned away, and they are in his favor, and he giveth them life; therefore, weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”²⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. John Breen, “Pioneer Memoirs,” unpublished, as quoted on “The Americanization of Utah,” PBS television broadcast.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.
3. Isaiah 43:25.
4. Jeremiah 31:34.
5. Hebrews 8:12; see also Hebrews 10:17.
6. Alma 36:12; italics added.
7. Alma 36:15; italics added.
8. Alma 36:19–20.
9. Isaiah 1:18–19.
10. 2 Nephi 25:23.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:21.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 58:43; see also Ezekiel 18:21–24, 31–32.
13. Mosiah 4:12; italics added.
14. Alma 42:16.
15. Forgiveness will come eventually to all repentant souls who have not committed the unpardonable sin (see Matthew 12:31). Forgiveness does not, however, necessarily ensure exaltation, as is the case with David (see D&C 132:38–39; see also Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:25–27; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 339).

16. See Matthew 5:25-26.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 138.
18. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 256-57.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 121:43.
20. Philippians 4:7.
21. See Mosiah 4:1-3.
22. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 442; italics added.
23. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 191; italics added.
24. Joseph Smith Translation, Psalm 30:5; see also Doctrine and Covenants 61:20.

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Twelve, has been our concluding speaker for this session.

The chorus will now sing "Our Savior's Love." The benediction will be offered by Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The chorus sang "Our Savior's Love." Elder F. Burton Howard offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 1995, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

Music was provided by the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Jay J. Campbell, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

To begin the meeting, President Faust made the following remarks.

President James E. Faust

My beloved brethren and sisters, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We welcome you to the second general session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference of the Church. We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world

where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We note that Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, L. Aldin Porter, and Julio E. Dávila are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elder Neil L. Andersen and Bishop Richard C. Edgley are attending the overflow gathering in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

The music for this session will be provided by the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region, under the direction of Brother Jay J. Campbell, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

We shall begin with the choir singing "The Morning Breaks." The invocation will be offered by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Seventy.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks." Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "I Am a Child of God." President Thomas S.

Monson will then present the General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

The choir sang "I Am a Child of God."

The Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities and the general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd K. Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the Counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

In view of their assignments to serve in Area Presidencies, it is proposed that we extend an official vote of release and appreciation to Elders Rex D. Pinegar and Charles Didier for their service as members of the Presidency of the Quo-

rum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy Elders Carlos E. Asay, L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Monte J. Brough, W. Eugene Hansen, Jack H. Goasland, and Harold G. Hillam. All in favor may manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders Ted E. Brewerton and Hans B. Ringger and that they be designated as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Those in favor, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as General Authorities, it is proposed that we release Elders Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J. Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

Those who may wish to join us in releasing with a vote of thanks Elders Charles Didier, J. Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard as the general Sunday School presidency may so indicate.

It is proposed that we sustain as the general Sunday School presidency Elder Harold G. Hillam as president, Elder F. Burton Howard as first counselor, and Elder Glenn L. Pace as second counselor. Those in favor, please indicate. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your loving and prayerful support.

President Faust

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker at this session.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Need for increased consecration

Whenever Church members speak of consecration, it should be done reverently while acknowledging that each of us “come[s] short of the glory of God,” some of us far short (Romans 3:23). Even the conscientious have not arrived, but they sense the shortfall and are genuinely striving. Consoling, God’s grace flows not only to those “who love [Him] and keep all [His] commandments,” but likewise to those “that [seek] so to do” (D&C 46:9).

A second group of members are “honorable” but not “valiant.” They are not really aware of the gap nor of the importance of closing it (see D&C 76:75, 79). These “honorable” individuals are certainly not miserable nor wicked, nor are they unrighteous and unhappy. It is not what they have done but what they have left undone that is amiss. For example, if valiant, they could touch others deeply instead of merely being remembered pleasantly.

In a third group are those who are grossly entangled with the “ungodliness” of the world, reminding us all, as Peter wrote, that if “[we are] overcome” by something worldly, “[we are] brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

Serve the true Master

If one “mind[s] the things of the flesh” (Romans 8:5), he cannot “have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16) because his thought patterns are “far from” Jesus, as are the desires or the “intents of his heart” (Mosiah 5:13). Ironically, if the Master is a stranger to us, then we

will merely end up serving other masters. The sovereignty of these other masters is real, even if it sometimes is subtle, for they do call their cadence. Actually, “we are all enlisted” (*Hymns*, no. 250), if only in the ranks of the indifferent.

To the extent that we are not willing to be led by the Lord, we will be driven by our appetites, or we will be greatly preoccupied with the lesser things of the day. The remedy is implicit in the marvelous lamentation of King Benjamin: “For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13). For many moderns, sad to say, the query “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42) would be answered, “I really don’t think of Him at all!”

Examples of keeping back a portion

Consider three examples of how honorable people in the Church keep back a portion and thus prevent greater consecration (see Acts 5:1–4).

A sister gives commendable, visible civic service. Yet even with her good image in the community, she remains a comparative stranger to Jesus’ holy temples and His holy scriptures, two vital dimensions of discipleship. But she could have Christ’s image in her countenance (see Alma 5:14).

An honorable father, dutifully involved in the cares of his family, is less than kind and gentle with individual family members. Though a comparative stranger to Jesus’ gentleness and kindness, which we are instructed to emulate,

a little more effort by this father would make such a large difference.

Consider the returned missionary, skills polished while serving an honorable mission, striving earnestly for success in his career. Busy, he ends up in a posture of some accommodation with the world. Thus he forgoes building up the kingdom first and instead builds up himself. A small course correction now would make a large, even destinational, difference for him later on.

Greater consecration corrects omissions

These deficiencies just illustrated are those of omission. Once the telestial sins are left behind and henceforth avoided, the focus falls ever more on the sins of omission. These omissions signify a lack of qualifying fully for the celestial kingdom. Only greater consecration can correct these omissions, which have consequences just as real as do the sins of commission. Many of us thus have sufficient faith to avoid the major sins of commission, but not enough faith to sacrifice our distracting obsessions or to focus on our omissions.

Most omissions occur because we fail to get outside ourselves. We are so busy checking on our own temperatures, we do not notice the burning fevers of others even when we can offer them some of the needed remedies, such as encouragement, kindness, and commendation. The hands which hang down and most need to be lifted up belong to those too discouraged even to reach out anymore.

Letting God educate our desires

Actually, everything depends—initially and finally—on our desires. These shape our thought patterns. Our desires thus precede our deeds and lie at the very cores of our souls, tilting us toward or away from God (see D&C 4:3). God can educate our desires (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake

City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 297). Others seek to manipulate our desires. But it is we who form the desires, the “thoughts and intents of [our] hearts” (Mosiah 5:13).

The end rule is “according to [our] desires . . . shall it be done unto [us]” (D&C 11:17), “for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts” (D&C 137:9; see also Alma 41:5; D&C 6:20, 27). One’s individual will thus remains uniquely his. God will not override it nor overwhelm it. Hence we’d better want the consequences of what we want!

Another cosmic fact: only by aligning our wills with God’s is full happiness to be found. Anything less results in a lesser portion (see Alma 12:10–11). The Lord will work with us even if, at first, we “can no more than desire” but are willing to “give place for a portion of [His] words” (Alma 32:27). A small foothold is all He needs! But we must desire and provide it.

The need to lose ourselves

So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see Mosiah 15:7). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our pre-eminence, and our possessions. No wonder we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see Luke 9:24). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding his true identity! Ironically, so many people already lose themselves anyway in their consuming hobbies and preoccupations but with far, far lesser things.

Ever observant, in both the first and second estates, consecrated Jesus always knew in which direction He faced: He consistently emulated His Father: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what

he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19), for "I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11).

Submission brings revelation and joy

As one's will is increasingly submissive to the will of God, he can receive inspiration and revelation so much needed to help meet the trials of life. In the trying and very defining Isaac episode, faithful Abraham "staggered not . . . through unbelief" (Romans 4:20). Of that episode John Taylor observed that "nothing but the spirit of revelation could have given him this confidence, and . . . sustained him under these peculiar circumstances" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:361). Will we too trust the Lord amid a perplexing trial for which we have no easy explanation? Do we understand—really comprehend—that Jesus knows and understands when we are stressed and perplexed? The complete consecration which effected the Atonement ensured Jesus' perfect empathy; He felt our very pains and afflictions before we did and knows how to succor us (see Alma 7:11–12; 2 Nephi 9:21). Since the Most Innocent suffered the most, our own cries of "Why?" cannot match His. But we can utter the same submissive word "nevertheless . . ." (Matthew 26:39).

Progression toward submission confers another blessing: an enhanced capacity for joy. Counseled President Brigham Young, "If you want to enjoy exquisitely, become a Latter-day Saint, and then live the doctrine of Jesus Christ" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:247).

Thus, brothers and sisters, consecration is not resignation or a mindless caving in. Rather, it is a deliberate expanding outward, making us more honest when we sing, "More used would I be" ("More Holiness Give Me," *Hymns*, no. 131). Consecration, likewise, is not

shoulder-shrugging acceptance, but, instead, shoulder-squaring to better bear the yoke.

Do not shrink from full consecration

Consecration involves pressing forward "with a steadfastness in Christ" with a "brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men . . . [while] feasting upon the word of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20). Jesus pressed forward sublimely. He did not shrink, such as by going only 60 percent of the distance toward the full atonement. Instead, He "finished [His] preparations" for all mankind, bringing a universal resurrection—not one in which 40 percent of us would have been left out (see D&C 19:18–19).

Each of us might well ask, "In what ways am I shrinking or holding back?" Meek introspection may yield some bold insights! For example, we can tell much by what we have already willingly discarded along the pathway of discipleship. It is the only pathway where littering is permissible, even encouraged. In the early stages, the debris left behind includes the grosser sins of commission. Later debris differs; things begin to be discarded which have caused the misuse or underuse of our time and talent.

Hard times can hasten consecration

Along this pathway leading to consecration, stern and unsought challenges sometimes hasten this jettisoning, which is needed to achieve increased consecration (see Helaman 12:3). If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. If we are too contented, a dose of divine discontent may come. A relevant insight may be contained in reproof. A new calling beckons us away from comfortable routines wherein the needed competencies have already been developed. One may be stripped of accustomed luxury so that the malignant mole of materialism may be removed. One may be scorched

by humiliation so pride can be melted away. Whatever we lack will get attention, one way or another.

John Taylor indicated that the Lord may even choose to wrench our very heartstrings (see *Journal of Discourses*, 14:360). If our hearts are set too much upon the things of this world, they may need to be wrenched, or broken, or undergo a mighty change (see Alma 5:12).

Submit to God and trust Him

Consecration is thus both a principle and a process, and it is not tied to a single moment. Instead, it is freely given, drop by drop, until the cup of consecration brims and finally runs over.

Long before that, however, as Jesus declared, we must “settle this in [our] hearts”: that we will do what He asks of us (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28). President Young further counseled us “to submit to the hand of the Lord, . . . and acknowledge his hand in all things, . . . then you will be exactly right; and until you come to that point, you cannot be entirely right. That is what we have to come to” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:352).

Thus, acknowledging God’s hand includes, in the words of the Prophet Joseph, trusting that God has made “ample provision” beforehand to achieve all His purposes, including His purposes in our lives (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 220). Sometimes He clearly directs; other times it seems He merely permits some things to happen. Therefore, we will not always understand the role of God’s hand, but we know enough of His heart and mind to be submissive. Thus when we are perplexed and stressed, explanatory help is not always immediately forthcoming, but compensatory help will be. Thus our process of cognition gives way to our personal submission as we experience those moments when we learn to

“be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Then the more one’s will is thus “swallowed up,” the more his afflictions, rather than necessarily being removed, will be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” (Alma 31:38).

Seventy years ago, Lord Moulton coined a perceptive phrase, “obedience to the unenforceable,” describing “the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey” (“Law and Manners,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1924, p. 1). God’s blessings, including those associated with consecration, come by unforced obedience to the laws upon which they are predicated (see D&C 130:20–21). Thus our deepest desires determine our degree of “obedience to the unenforceable.” God seeks to have us become more consecrated by giving everything. Then, when we come home to Him, He will generously give us “all that [He] hath” (D&C 84:38).

The only possession that is ours to give

In conclusion, the submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we “give,” brothers and sisters, are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!

Consecration thus constitutes the only unconditional surrender which is also a total victory!

May we deeply desire that victory, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, will be

our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

Powerful ideas

Last summer I attended the funeral of an elect lady. One speaker described three of her great qualities: loyalty, obedience, and faith. As he elaborated on her life, I thought how appropriate it was to speak of such powerful qualities in a funeral tribute. A life is not a trivial thing, and its passing should not be memorialized with trivial things. A funeral service is a time to speak of powerful ideas—ideas that can appropriately stand beside the importance of life, ideas that are powerful in their influence on those who remain behind.

As I enjoyed the spirit of this inspiring funeral, my thoughts were directed toward the application of this principle in other settings. Parents should also teach powerful ideas. So should home teachers, visiting teachers, and the teachers in various classes. The Savior warned that we will be judged for “every idle word that [we] shall speak” (Matthew 12:36). Modern revelation commands us to cease from “light speeches” and “light-mindedness” (D&C 88:121) and to cast away “idle thoughts” and “excess of laughter” (D&C 88:69). There are plenty of other spokesmen for trivial things. Latter-day Saints should be constantly concerned with teaching and emphasizing those great and powerful eternal truths that will help us find our way back to the presence of our Heavenly Father.

About thirty years ago some scholars authored a book on general education—the body of knowledge expected of all educated persons. Its title, *The Knowledge Most Worth Having*, is a good reminder of the fact that knowledge is not of equal value (Wayne C. Booth, ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1967]). Some knowledge is more important than others. That principle also applies to what we call spiritual knowledge.

We are children of God

Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song “I Am a Child of God” (*Hymns*, no. 301), sung so impressively by the choir at the beginning of this session. Here is the answer to one of life’s great questions, “Who am I?” I am a child of God with a spirit lineage to heavenly parents. That parentage defines our eternal potential. That powerful idea is a potent antidepressant. It can strengthen each of us to make righteous choices and to seek the best that is within us. Establish in the mind of a young person the powerful idea that he or she is a child of God, and you have given self-respect and motivation to move against the problems of life.

When we understand our relationship to God, we also understand our relationship to one another. All men and women on this earth are the offspring of God, spirit brothers and sisters. What a powerful idea! No wonder God’s Only Begotten Son commanded us to love one another. If only we could do so! What a different world it would be if brotherly and sisterly love and unselfish assistance could transcend all boundaries of nation, creed, and color. Such love would not erase all differences of opinion and action, but it would encourage each of us to focus our opposition on actions rather than actors.

The power of love

The eternal truth that our Heavenly Father loves all His children is an im-

mensely powerful idea. It is especially powerful when children can visualize it through the love and sacrifice of their earthly parents. Love is the most powerful force in the world. Arthur Henry King has said: "Love is not just an ecstasy, not just an intense feeling. It is a driving force. It is something that carries us through our life of joyful duty" (*The Abundance of the Heart* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986], p. 84).

We all have our own examples of the power of love. More than twenty-five years ago I recorded some memories I had of my father, who died before I was eight years old. What I wrote then illustrates the power of love in the life of a boy:

"The strongest impression I have of my relationship with my father I cannot document with any event or any words I can recall. It is a feeling. Based on words and actions long since lost to mind, this feeling persists with all the clarity of perfect faith. He loved me and he was proud of me. . . . That is the kind of memory a boy can treasure, and also a man" ("Memories of My Father," 15 Oct. 1967).

Mortal life has a purpose

Another powerful idea we should teach one another is that mortal life has a purpose and that mortal death is not the end but only a transition to the next phase of an existence that is immortal. President Brigham Young taught that "our existence here is for the sole purpose of exaltation and restoration to the presence of our Father and God" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 37). The idea of eternal progress is one of the most powerful ideas in our theology. It gives us hope when we falter and challenge when we soar. Surely this is one of the great "solemnities of eternity" that we are commanded to let "rest upon [our] minds" (D&C 43:34).

The work of the Church is eternal

Another idea that is powerful to lift us from discouragement is that the work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "to bring to pass the . . . eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), is an eternal work. Not all problems are overcome and not all needed relationships are fixed in mortality. The work of salvation goes on beyond the veil of death, and we should not be too apprehensive about incompleteness within the limits of mortality.

Heavenly Father will hear our prayers

A powerful idea with immediate practical application is the reality that we can pray to our Heavenly Father and He will hear our prayers and help us in the way that is best for us. Most of us have experienced the terrible empty feeling that comes from being separated from those who love us. If we remember that we can pray and be heard and helped, we can always withstand that feeling of emptiness. We can always be in touch with a powerful friend who loves us and helps us in His own time and in His own way.

Thousands of experiences show that we can pray and have our prayers answered. Some of the choicest involve young children. In the biography of President Spencer W. Kimball we read:

"Again and again Spencer watched his parents take their problems to the Lord. One day when Spencer was five and out doing his chores, little one-year-old Fannie wandered from the house and was lost. No one could find her. Clare, sixteen, said, 'Ma, if we pray, the Lord will direct us to Fannie.' So the mother and children prayed. Immediately after the prayer Gordon walked to the very spot where Fannie was fast asleep in a large box behind the chicken coop. 'We thanked our Heavenly Father over and over,' Olive recorded in her journal" (in Edward L. Kimball and

Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977], p. 31).

The Resurrection and Atonement

Every follower of Jesus Christ knows that the most powerful ideas of the Christian faith are the resurrection and the atonement of Jesus Christ. Because of Him we can be forgiven of our sins and we will live again. Those powerful ideas have been explained in countless sermons from this pulpit and a million others. They are well known but not well applied in the lives of most of us.

Choose what builds, not what tears down

Our model is not the latest popular hero of sports or entertainment, not our accumulated property or prestige, and not the expensive toys and diversions that encourage us to concentrate on what is temporary and forget what is eternal. Our model—our first priority—is Jesus Christ. We must testify of Him and teach one another how we can apply His teachings and His example in our lives.

Brigham Young gave us some practical advice on how to do this. "The difference between God and the Devil," he said, "is that God creates and organizes, while the whole study of the Devil is to destroy" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 69). In that contrast we have an important example of the reality of "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11).

Remember, our Savior, Jesus Christ, always builds us up and never tears us down. We should apply the power of that example in the ways we use our time, including our recreation and diversions. Consider the themes of the books, magazines, movies, television, and music we make popular by our patronage. Do the purposes and actions portrayed in our chosen entertainment build up or tear down the children of God? During my lifetime I have seen a strong trend to displace what builds up and dignifies

the children of God with portrayals and performances that are depressing, demeaning, and destructive.

The powerful idea in this example is that whatever builds people up serves the cause of the Master, and whatever tears people down serves the cause of the adversary. We support one cause or the other every day by our patronage. This should remind us of our responsibility and motivate us toward fulfilling it in a way that would be pleasing to Him whose suffering offers us hope and whose example should give us direction.

Put the Savior first

We should always put the Savior first. The first commandment Jehovah gave to the children of Israel was, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). This seems like a simple idea, but in practice many find it difficult.

It is surprisingly easy to take what should be our first devotion and subordinate it to other priorities. Fifty years ago the Christian philosopher C. S. Lewis illustrated that tendency with an example that is distressingly applicable in our own day. In his book *The Screwtape Letters*, a senior devil explains how to corrupt Christians and frustrate the work of Jesus Christ. One letter explains how any "extreme devotion" can lead Christians away from the Lord and the practice of Christianity. Lewis gives two examples, extreme patriotism or extreme pacifism, and explains how either "extreme devotion" can corrupt its adherent:

"Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the 'Cause,' in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the British war effort or of pacifism. . . .

Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing" (C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, rev. ed. [New York: Macmillan, 1982], p. 35).

We can readily see that tendency in our own time, with many causes that are good in themselves but become spiritually corrupting when they assume priorities ahead of Him who commanded, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Jesus Christ and His work come first. Anything that would use Him or His kingdom or His church as a means to an end serves the cause of the adversary.

"Never take no cutoffs"

Two other powerful ideas were given voice by a noble young woman who survived a terrible experience. Virginia Reed was a survivor of the tragic Donner-Reed party, which made one of the earliest wagon treks into California. If this wagon train had followed the established Oregon Trail from Fort Bridger (Wyoming) northwest to Fort Hall (Idaho) and then southwest toward California, they would have reached their destination in safety. Instead, they were misled by a promoter. Lansford W. Hastings persuaded them they could save significant distance and time by following his so-called Hastings Cutoff. The Donner-Reed party left the proven trail at Fort Bridger and struggled southwest. They blazed a trail through the rugged Wasatch Mountains and then south of the Great Salt Lake and westward over the soggy surface of the salt flats in furnace heat.

The delays and incredible energies expended on this unproven route cost the Donner-Reed party an extra month in reaching the Sierra Nevada Mountains. As they hastened up the eastern slope trying to beat the first snows, they were caught in a tragic winter storm only one day short of the summit and a down-

hill passage into California. Marooned for the winter, half their group perished from starvation and cold.

After months in the mountains and incredible hardships of hunger and terror, thirteen-year-old Virginia Reed reached California and sent a letter to her cousin in the Midwest. After recounting her experiences and the terrible sufferings of their party, she concluded with this wise advice: "Never take no cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can" (Virginia E. B. Reed letter to Mary Gillespie, 16 May 1847, quoted in J. Roderic Korn and Dale L. Morgan, eds., *West from Fort Bridger* [Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1994], p. 238).

That is powerful and true advice, especially for teenagers. Young people are surrounded by many beckoning paths and many persuasive promoters who offer advice and cutoffs as substitutes for the proven way. "Try out this detour" and "tarry here for a while" are familiar proposals on the journey of life. My young friends, remember Virginia Reed's advice: "Never take no cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can."

Focus on powerful ideas

I conclude with an example from the life of the Apostle Paul. During his ministry he was exposed to ample light-mindedness, idle thoughts, and trivial things. In Athens he observed that "all the Athenians and strangers which were there [in his immediate vicinity] spent their time in nothing else, but . . . to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). Paul's determination to focus on powerful ideas is evident in one of his letters to the Saints in Corinth. He had not come "with excellency of speech or of wisdom," he reminded them. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

Let us follow the commandments of God and the examples of his servants.

Let us focus our teachings on those great and powerful ideas that have eternal significance in promoting righteousness, building up the children of God, and

helping each of us toward our destiny of eternal life. That we may do so is my fervent prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Loren C. Dunn

The law of witnesses

Since the restoration of the gospel there has been given at this pulpit and in many other places the most marvelous array of direct testimony to the divine mission of the Redeemer that possibly has ever been recorded.

The law of witnesses has always been a part of the Lord's work on earth. This law states that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1; see also Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:15–16; John 8:12–29). This witness confirms that certain events took place and that God-given doctrine and principles are true.

The first duty of a witness is to testify. A person who can testify to the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is speaking of things he or she knows to be true. With the Lord and His true witnesses there is truth that reaches beyond worldly understanding. Paul understood this when he said:

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:12–13).

I was just a young boy when I sat in a stake conference in the Tooele Utah Stake, listening carefully to the visitor. He was LeGrand Richards, and he preached the gospel in his warm and spiritual way. That positive experience has stayed with me. I don't remember

what he said, but I do know how I felt as he spoke. I learned later that I felt that way because I was listening to a special witness of Jesus Christ. I knew he knew, and somehow my roots grew deeper that day as to truths of the gospel.

The calling of special witnesses

Orson Pratt said: "A person can not be a witness to that which he merely believes. God requires mankind, or certain individuals among mankind, to be witnesses for him—witnesses of his existence—so that they can bear testimony to others" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:209–10).

There were many who saw the great miracles and heard the teachings of the Savior as He dwelled on earth, but not all became witnesses. There were no personal administrations of Christ to the unbelieving. Only to certain ones did the Lord open their eyes so they knew who He really was.

With the calling of the Twelve by the Savior, there was instituted the calling of the special witnesses of Christ.

The Prophet Joseph, referring to the resurrection of the Lord, said, "God raised Him from the dead, and we (the apostles) are His witnesses . . . , and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God ha[s] given to [all those who] obey Him" (*History of the Church*, 2:19).

Church members are witnesses

Every person who receives baptism into the Church and has received and felt the confirmation of the Spirit through the gift of the Holy Ghost stands as a

witness "of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9). When partaking of the sacrament, that person renews that witness to take the Savior's name, keep His commandments, and remember Him. A person so moved by the Spirit not only knows these things himself, but the Spirit carries them into the hearts of others. This is the basis of the Church's great missionary effort. "For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1).

The witness of the Holy Ghost is even more compelling than the witness of sight. As members of the Church, we become witnesses of the Savior and the truthfulness of this work not only in word but also in keeping our covenants and in how we treat others and in how we live our everyday lives.

Testimonies of special witnesses

The First Presidency and the Twelve are called as "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23). They are men who by divine designation, priesthood ordination, and the fire of the Holy Ghost hold the keys to the ministry on earth. The Seventy act under the direction of the First Presidency and the Twelve and are special witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world. Together, all the members become what Paul refers to as a "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1).

The Prophet Joseph defined the work of the kingdom in our dispensation with these sacred words:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him [Jesus Christ], this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22-23).

The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—stated, "And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true" ("The Testimony of Three Witnesses," Book of Mormon).

Said Wilford Woodruff from this Tabernacle: "Joseph Smith was what he professed to be, a prophet of God, a seer and revelator. He . . . lived long enough to deliver the keys of the kingdom . . . unto the Twelve Apostles. . . . The foundation that he laid we have built upon" (in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:164).

And said David O. McKay, whose life reached from some of those who began this work to some of us serving today who were called by him: "I have an abiding testimony that the Father and the Son appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and revealed through him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . Godhood, Brotherhood, Service—these three guiding principles in the Christ[like] life permeate all our Church activity" (in Joseph E. Cardon and Samuel O. Bennion, comps., *Testimonies of the Divinity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Its Leaders* [Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1930], p. 178).

And from our living Prophet-President, Gordon B. Hinckley: "I have a testimony of the living reality of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, my Savior and my Redeemer, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New Testament. . . . Because of His atoning sacrifice, . . . each of us, if we will walk in obedience to His truths, may go on to exaltation and an eternal life beyond our ability at this stage to understand or comprehend.

He is my Redeemer, my Lord, my Savior, my King, my friend" (Vacaville-Santa Rosa California Regional Conference, priesthood leadership session, 20 May 1995).

The witness borne by those who occupy this pulpit today is consistent with those who, by divine authority, began this work.

That same witness is echoed by the members and missionaries of this church to every one of our Father's children. It is an invitation to learn of the doctrine, to feel the Spirit, and to be healed by partaking of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

My personal witness

And to that witness I would add my own witness as to the truthfulness of this work. I know that we have a God in heaven who looks after us and is watching over us. I know God lives. I know He lives. I know God lives. I know this. I

know this. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer. I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I know that Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet of God today and that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. May the Lord so bless us that we may listen to the witnesses and bear witness ourselves, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, followed by Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Elder Ted E. Brewerton, who received emeritus status in this session, will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Ted E. Brewerton

Search Book of Mormon to know Christ

Some people place faith in good luck symbols, even a rabbit's foot, but remember, it didn't do the rabbit any good.

I do not wish to be light-minded, but I believe we should ask ourselves if we truly and seriously place our faith where it belongs and rely upon the merits of Christ. Do we have an assurance that salvation comes only through Him and that He will take upon himself our burdens and sorrows if we place unwavering faith in Him?

The scriptures state, "They are they which testify of [God]" (John 5:39). Eternal life is knowing God and His Holy Son (see John 17:3). One can know Him by searching the Book of Mormon. Every page testifies of Him. The changes published in the Book of Mormon in 1981 go

back beyond the first edition of 1830 to the handwritten manuscript.

Ancient texts support Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon is a sacred, ancient American document recorded by writers as the events unfolded, starting more than 2,000 years ago.

The Book of Mormon is a record of families that the Lord led to the Americas for specific purposes. Three groups left the land of Jerusalem and crossed the oceans, beginning several centuries before the birth of our Savior, and arrived in the promised land, the Americas.

Ancient American texts written by native Americans support this origin. For example, a translator of the *Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*, the original text of which was recorded in 1554 in the lan-

guage of the Quiché of Guatemala from legends centuries old, states:

"The three great Quiché nations . . . are descendants of the Ten Tribes of the Kingdom of Israel, whom Shalmaneser reduced to perpetual captivity and who, finding themselves on the border of Assyria, resolved to emigrate. . . .

"These, then, were the three nations of Quichés, and they came from where the sun rises, descendants of Israel, of the same language and same customs. . . . They were sons of Abraham and Jacob. . . .

"Now on the twenty-eighth of September of 1554 we sign this attestation in which we have written that which by tradition our ancestors told us, who came from the other part of the sea, from Cíván-Tulán, bordering on Babylonia" (*Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*, trans. Dionisio José Chonay and Delia Goetz [Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953], pp. 167, 170, 194).

Latter-day Lamanites recognize truth

Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, wrote: "As the ancient Israelites suffered a dispersion which sprinkled them among all the nations, so the descendants of Laman and Lemuel [sons of Lehi] were sifted over the vast areas of the western hemisphere. *They are found from pole to pole*" (*Children of Promise* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981], p. 31; italics added).

Many migratory groups came to the Americas, but none was as important as the three mentioned in the Book of Mormon. The blood of these people flows in the veins of the Blackfoot and the Blood Indians of Alberta, Canada; in the Navajo and the Apache of the American Southwest; the Inca of western South America; the Aztec of Mexico; the Maya of Guatemala; and in other native American groups in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific islands.

These choice native people recognize the truth of the Book of Mormon, which was recorded for them by their own ancestors. President Spencer W. Kimball said:

"The converted Lamanite is devout. Few ever apostatize. Some lose their way as they partake of the worldliness about them, but generally the children of Lehi of the twentieth century have inherited that grace and ability to believe like their ancestors of the long ago. We read in Helaman 6:36: 'And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of *their easiness and willingness to believe in his words*'" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 178; italics added).

A second witness of Christ

Every ecclesiastical authority of *any church* and every agnostic should rejoice and praise God for having sent the priceless Book of Mormon to them or to us. *Why?* Because it is a sacred, second, undeniable witness to the world that God lives and Jesus is the very Christ, our Redeemer.

The *first witness* is the Holy Bible, which testifies of the Master from the Middle East. The Lord said in John 10:16 that other sheep would hear His voice. The Lord came to the Americas after His resurrection and said, "And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (3 Nephi 15:21). Two such witnesses cannot be denied without placing the soul in peril.

The crucial messages or purposes of the Book of Mormon are shown on its title page: "To show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the

Lord . . . And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations."

References to a bearded white god

Ancient American literature contains references to a white, bearded god who descended out of the heavens. He is called by many names; one example is Quetzalcoatl. Historians of the sixteenth century, whose texts I have, recorded pre-Hispanic beliefs concerning the white, bearded god who came to the Americas *long before* the arrival of the Spanish conquerors. The following paragraphs contain examples of these beliefs:

Bernardo de Sahagun (born 1499) wrote: "Quetzalcoatl was esteemed and considered as a god, and was worshipped in older times. He had long hair and was bearded. The people worshipped only the Lord" (*Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España* [Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1985], pp. 195, 598).

Diego Duran (born 1537) wrote: "A great man—a person venerable and religious—bearded, tall, long hair, dignified deportment, heroic acts, miracles—I affirm he could have been one of the blessed apostles" (*Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*, 1867, first ed., 2 vols. [Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1967], 1:9).

Bartolomé de las Casas (born 1474) wrote that Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, was white, had a rounded beard, was tall, and came from the sea in the east, from whence he will return (see *Los Indios de Mexico y Nueva España Antología* [Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1982], pp. 54, 218, 223).

The Tamanacos Indian tribes in Venezuela have the same legend of a white, bearded god: "[Amalivacá] had a face the color of the light fluffy clouds of the morning, and white was his long head of hair. . . . He said: 'I am Amalivacá, and I come in the name of my father INAIKI'" (Arturo Hellmund Tello, *Leyen-*

das Indigenas del Bajo Orinoco, trans. Ted E. Brewerton [Buenos Aires, Argentina: Imprenta Lopez, Peru 666, 1948], pp. 19–22).

The Book of Mormon gives an accurate account of the coming of the Lord to ancient America.

The Book of Mormon—a firm anchor

When we accept the ancient roots of the book and believe that Joseph Smith did have ancient records that could not be in English, we then may ask how he translated them. The only reasonable answer is the way he said: by divine revelation.

What would be more perilous to us, eternally, than to say the Book of Mormon is holy scripture if it were not? Those who have questions or concerns about the Church may cling in security to this firm anchor that is immutable and tangible evidence of the truthfulness of the Church.

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi wrote, "For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23).

The Holy Ghost gives primary evidence

Elder B. H. Roberts wrote in 1909:

"[The Holy Ghost] must ever be the chief source of evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon. All other evidence is secondary to this, the primary and infallible. No arrangement of evidence, however skilfully ordered; no argument, however adroitly made, can ever take [the] place [of the Holy Ghost]. . . .

" . . . Secondary evidences in support of truth, like secondary causes in natural phenomena, may be of first-rate importance, and mighty factors in the achievement of God's purposes" (*New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909], 2:vi–vii).

The sun rises rather quietly, and at times we think that the Lord's voice is that quiet, but His voice is audible if we will only pray, meditate, and listen as He places clear thoughts in our minds.

As surely as the sun rises, God lives, as does His Almighty Son. As surely as the sun rises daily, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is *His*.

Because the sun rises, we see everything else.

Because Jesus Christ lives, we see by His light eternal, unchanging truths and an illuminated path showing the purpose of our premortal life, the reason for our

current existence, and the effect of premortal and mortal life on our life after what we call death.

The Bible is a witness.

The Book of Mormon is a witness.

I am one of the witnesses that He *is* risen, and He *is* coming. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder Ted E. Brewerton has just addressed us.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Blessings of the priesthood

A few weeks ago I was in Santiago, Chile, participating in priesthood training meetings. In the Saturday meeting we had a discussion about the importance of brethren receiving the priesthood after baptism. Early Sunday morning I was awakened with a moving testimony of the power of the priesthood in our lives. For a few hours before dawn I reflected and pondered upon what the priesthood means to me, to my family, and to all the world.

Brothers and sisters, can you imagine how dark and empty mortality would be if there were no priesthood? If the power of the priesthood were not upon the earth, the adversary would have freedom to roam and reign without restraint. There would be no gift of the Holy Ghost to direct and enlighten us; no prophets to speak in the name of the Lord; no temples where we could make sacred, eternal covenants; no authority to bless or baptize, to heal or comfort. Without the power of the priesthood, "the whole earth would be utterly wasted" (D&C 2:3; see also vv. 1-2). There would be no light, no hope—only darkness.

What a dark world this would be without priesthood blessings for you and me.

A loving Father in Heaven has sent His sons and daughters here to mortality to gain experience and to be tested. He has provided the way back to Him and has given us enough spiritual light to see our way. The priesthood of God gives light to His children in this dark and troubled world. Through priesthood power we can receive the gift of the Holy Ghost to lead us to truth, testimony, and revelation. This gift is available on an equal basis to men, women, and children. Through the blessings of the priesthood we can be equipped with "the whole armour of God, that [we] may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11; see also vv. 12-18). This protection is available to every one of us.

Through the priesthood many other blessings are also available to all of the sons and daughters of God, making it possible for us to make sacred covenants and receive holy ordinances that enable us to travel that strait and narrow way back to our Father in Heaven (see Matthew 7:13-14).

The power of God

The priesthood is the power of God, which is given to man to act in His name. The priesthood of God is timeless. It "was in the beginning, [and] shall be in the end of the world also" (Moses 6:7; see also *History of the Church*, 3:386). Before this world was created, the pre-mortal Council in Heaven was held under the direction of the priesthood. The formation of the universe and of the world upon which we live was brought to pass not by chance but through the power of the priesthood. The great Creator spoke, and the elements obeyed. The processes of nature that enable us to exist on this planet, the resources of this world that sustain life—all were set into motion and continue their course through the power of God's magnificent priesthood. While most of the earth's inhabitants do not recognize this priesthood power, all living creatures are its beneficiaries.

Priesthood given to man

The creation of this earth provided a place for the sons and daughters of God to live and grow—a place where our Father could bestow the blessings of His wondrous priesthood upon us. The priesthood was first given to Adam, who held the keys from generation to generation. Adam ordained seven generations of his posterity to the priesthood, beginning with his sons Abel and Seth (see D&C 84:16; 107:40–53). After the death of Adam, the priesthood continued from father to son, even until Melchizedek.

Originally this priesthood "was called the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek" (D&C 107:3–4) because "Melchizedek was such a great high priest" (v. 2).

One who received the priesthood at the hands of Melchizedek was Abraham (see D&C 84:14). The Lord later covenanted with Abraham that "in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal" (Abraham 2:11).

The Savior's use of the priesthood

It was through the priesthood that the Son of God, the Savior Jesus Christ, established His church—both in the Old World and in the New World. On both continents He established sacred covenants and ordinances as a means for entering "in at the strait gate . . . which leadeth unto life [eternal]" (Matthew 7:13–14; 3 Nephi 14:13–14). In both places He ordained twelve special witnesses to govern the Church and to carry His word to the sons and daughters of God.

Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of all who will repent and be baptized through the power of the holy priesthood. Through the Atonement our Savior broke the bands of death and became "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Priesthood withdrawn and restored

Following the death of Jesus and His Apostles, the earth was enshrouded with darkness. Known as the Dark Ages, this was a period of great apostasy, when for a long period of time the priesthood blessings and ordinances were withheld from mortals on the earth (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957–66], 2:45).

But as had been prophesied, the glorious priesthood of God, together with a fulness of its blessings, has been restored to the earth in our own time. The restoration of the priesthood and its blessings

began in 1820, when Joseph Smith, a young boy prophet, beheld and spoke with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in a sacred grove of trees.

Later additional heavenly messengers—John the Baptist; Peter, James, and John; Moses, Elias, and Elijah; and others—brought to the Prophet Joseph Smith the power, authority, and keys necessary for the salvation and exaltation of mankind. As a result, the Church of Jesus Christ was restored upon the earth, complete with the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods of old. Now, as God covenanted with Abraham, all the individuals and families of the earth may be blessed.

Think of it, brothers and sisters—the priesthood has been restored. It is here on the earth today. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the living prophet. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve are modern-day Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the direction of these prophets, seers, and revelators, who hold the keys in this dispensation, priesthood holders in the Church today have the legitimate right to act in the name of God. As His authorized agents, they are commissioned to go forth and bless others through the power and authority of the priesthood, making all priesthood covenants, ordinances, and blessings available today.

And the blessings of the priesthood are available to *everyone*. Indeed the Father “*inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God*” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Priesthood blessings as a child grows

What are some of the blessings of the priesthood? Come with me as we follow a child’s ideal spiritual journey through life. Let us see many of the possibilities he or she has during a lifetime to receive blessings through the priesthood.

As a newborn the baby is tenderly cradled in loving hands as the father, grandfather, bishop, or another priesthood holder pronounces a name and a sacred blessing upon the child as the Holy Spirit inspires.

Soon that child begins to attend Primary and Sunday School and receives lessons and instructions at the hands of faithful teachers—men and women who have been called and set apart by priesthood power to teach the ways of the Lord.

When the child reaches eight years of age, the age of accountability, he or she is immersed in the waters of baptism by one who holds the priesthood. The young boy or girl is then confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by one holding the holy Melchizedek Priesthood. In this ordinance the child is given the gift of the Holy Ghost, which, if he or she listens to the still, small voice, will help him or her to stay on the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life.

Every Sunday the growing child, together with other worthy Saints, receives the sacrament at the hands of priesthood bearers—the bread representing the body of Christ, and the water representing His blood that was shed to atone for our sins. During the sacrament, the child remembers the sufferings of the Savior, witnesses that he or she is willing to bear the Savior’s name, and promises to always remember Him and keep His commandments. In return, the Lord promises “*that they may always have His Spirit to be with them*” (D&C 20:77).

Priesthood blessings as youth grow

As the young man or young woman continues to mature, he or she may seek spiritual counsel and guidance from the bishop and other youth leaders. Aaronic Priesthood and Young Women leaders are men and women who have been called and set apart by priesthood authority to lead and inspire youth in the Church.

When additional counsel or comfort is needed, or during times of illness, the young man or woman may receive a priesthood blessing from a father, home teacher, bishop, or other priesthood holder. A patriarchal blessing—given through an ordained patriarch—contains words inspired by God to His sons and daughters, serving as a guide and comfort for a lifetime and even with eternal significance. Think of the wonder of it.

If he is found worthy, a young man receives the Aaronic Priesthood—the preparatory priesthood—and, as he matures, is ordained as a deacon, then as a teacher, and finally as a priest. Later he may qualify to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained to the office of elder. The young woman becomes a member of the Young Women organization and later of the Relief Society. All of these experiences give the young man or woman many opportunities to learn and serve—and to enjoy a brotherhood or a sisterhood that is more precious than typical friendships in the world.

The young man or young woman may be set apart as a full-time missionary and serve under the priesthood direction of a mission president, sharing a testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ with all who will listen. Through the blessings of service and sacrifice, they experience a humbling change of heart that allows them to discern the difference between the tendency of *taking* in the world in contrast to the *giving* of the kingdom of God. Then, having established a pattern of giving, they give Church and community service throughout their lives, while at the same time being blessed by the service of others.

Priesthood blessings in the temple

The greatest of priesthood blessings available to this young man or woman are found in the temple. There they get a glimpse of heaven. In that holy place, although they are *in* the world, they are

not *of* the world. In the temple they see themselves as the offspring of royalty—as a son or a daughter of God. The joys of eternity, which can seem so distant outside the temple, suddenly seem within reach.

In the temple the plan of salvation is explained and sacred covenants are made. These covenants, together with the wearing of sacred temple garments, strengthen and protect the endowed person against the powers of the adversary. After receiving their own endowments, the young man or woman may attend the temple and perform vicarious ordinances to make priesthood blessings available to those who have died without the opportunity of receiving these blessings during mortality.

In the culminating temple ordinance—eternal marriage—bride and groom are promised that if they are faithful, they will enjoy a family union with one another, with their children, and with the Lord throughout all eternity. It is called eternal life.

Priesthood blessings for families

As this righteous man or woman establishes a home with his or her eternal companion, they continue to enjoy blessings of the priesthood. Revelation from God is made known to them throughout their lives as they listen to and follow the counsel of living prophets, seers, and revelators. The husband dedicates the family's home "as a sanctuary . . . where family members can worship, find safety from the world, grow spiritually, and prepare for eternal family relationships" (*Lay Hold upon the Word of God* [Melchizedek Priesthood personal study guide 1, 1988], p. 155).

As their children grow, the parents teach them the gospel in family home evening. They teach their children to pray individually and as a family. They study the scriptures individually and as a family—including the Book of Mor-

mon and other scriptures of the Restoration—written and preserved through the generations of time by holy prophets. They teach them the plan of salvation. They help each son and daughter prepare to receive the same priesthood blessings and ordinances that they themselves have received.

Each time this mother is about to give birth, her devoted husband may gently place his hands upon her head and, through the power of the Melchizedek Priesthood, pronounce a special blessing. Later he tenderly cradles in his hands their newborn babe, born in the priesthood covenant, and utters inspired words of a father's blessing.

And thus the cycle of priesthood blessings begins again and again with each succeeding generation—all with the Father's sacred purpose of bringing to pass "the immortality and eternal life" of his sons and daughters (Moses 1:39).

Seek earnestly for priesthood blessings

My brothers and sisters, I have witnessed the remarkable power of the priesthood to lift and bless, to heal and comfort, to strengthen and empower men, women, and children throughout the world. With all the sincerity of my heart, I desire to see the blessings of the priesthood be made accessible to all.

You brethren who have the priesthood—magnify it. You who have had the priesthood but have allowed it to lie dormant—reactivate it. You brethren who have never had it—seek diligently to obtain it. And may all of us seek more earnestly to receive and share the blessings of the priesthood, bringing the powers of heaven more fully into our lives and into the lives of our loved ones.

A sonnet testimony

Since those early-morning hours in Santiago, I have reflected and pondered much upon the priesthood and what it

means to all the world. Let me share my deepest feelings in a sonnet testimony of the blessings of the priesthood.

For priesthood pow'r—a sacred, holy gift—

We praise thy blessed name, O Lord above,

For this, thy pow'r to bless, to guide, to lift,

Assures us of thy never-ending love.

What hopelessness, what darkness, what despair

Would fill our lives without thy priesthood's pow'r,

For Satan, free to bind us in his snare, Would drag us down in misery every hour.

Thy Holy Spirit fills our lives with light;

From Satan's fiery darts we may be free.

Thy covenants exalt; our hopes are bright:

Through priesthood pow'r we shall return to thee.

We sing hosannas! Thy blest name we praise

For priesthood pow'r restored in latter days!

I promise that the bounteous blessings of the priesthood can be ours through our obedience and that all of the magnificent, eternal blessings that God makes available to men and women and families upon this earth can be ours through the power of the priesthood. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just heard from Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder L. Tom Perry, also of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Lehi's dream of the tree of life

Lehi had a marvelous dream while he journeyed with his family into the wilderness. This dream or vision of the tree of life, symbolically presented, provides us with much knowledge about life and the course we should follow. The scriptures record:

"And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.

"And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

"And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit" (1 Nephi 8:10-12).

In Lehi's dream he beheld many seeking to come forward to partake of this delicious fruit, which was defined as the love of God. A rod of iron, meaning the word of God, would lead them to the tree. However, there was also a mist of darkness, or temptation, along the path that caused many to become lost along the way. Again the scriptures record:

"And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

"And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.

"And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious

building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

"And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

"And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:24-28).

Personal and family preparedness

It is this part of Lehi's dream I would like to comment on today. The current cries we hear coming from the great and spacious building tempt us to compete for ownership in the things of this world. We think we need a larger home with a three-car garage and a recreational vehicle parked next to it. We long for designer clothes, extra TV sets (all with VCRs), the latest model computers, and the newest car. Often these items are purchased with borrowed money without giving any thought to providing for our future needs. The result of all this instant gratification is overloaded bankruptcy courts and families that are far too preoccupied with their financial burdens.

We live in a most exciting and challenging period in human history. As technology sweeps through every facet of our lives, changes are occurring so rapidly that it can be difficult for us to keep our lives in balance. To maintain some semblance of stability in our lives, it is essential that we plan for our future. I believe it is time, and perhaps with some urgency, to review the counsel we have received in dealing with our personal and family preparedness. We want to be found with oil in our lamps suffi-

cient to endure to the end. President Spencer W. Kimball admonished us:

"In reviewing the Lord's counsel to us on the importance of preparedness, I am impressed with the plainness of the message. The Savior made it clear that we cannot place sufficient oil in our preparedness lamps by simply avoiding evil. We must also be anxiously engaged in a positive program of preparation."

President Kimball also said: "The Lord will not translate one's good hopes and desires and intentions into works. Each of us must do that for himself" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], p. 8).

"If ye are prepared ye shall not fear"

On a daily basis we witness widely fluctuating inflation; wars; interpersonal conflicts; national disasters; variances in weather conditions; innumerable forces of immorality, crime, and violence; attacks and pressures on the family and individuals; technological advances that make occupations obsolete; and so on. The need for preparation is abundantly clear. The great blessing of being prepared gives us freedom from fear, as guaranteed to us by the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants: "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30).

Just as it is important to prepare ourselves spiritually, we must also prepare ourselves for our temporal needs. Each of us needs to take the time to ask ourselves, What preparation should I make to care for my needs and the needs of my family?

We have been instructed for years to follow at least four requirements in preparing for that which is to come.

Gain an adequate education

First, gain an adequate education. Learn a trade or a profession to enable you to obtain steady employment that will provide remuneration sufficient to

care for yourself and your family. The rapidly changing world breeds obsolescence and requires us to be continually engaged in preparing ourselves for the future. We can become antiquated in our professions if we do not stay up-to-date. Imagine how many patients a dentist would have if he continued to use the same tools and techniques he used a decade ago. What about a businessman who tried to compete without the use of computers? Or a builder who had not stayed abreast of the latest materials and methods available? Education has, of necessity, become a lifelong pursuit. We must, in our scheduling of time, allot sufficient time to educate ourselves for now and for the future.

Live within your income

Second, live strictly within your income and save something for a rainy day. Incorporate in your lives the discipline of budgeting that which the Lord has blessed you with. As regularly as you pay your tithing, set aside an amount needed for future family requirements. Include your children while planning for the future. I am convinced that in many backyards, a crop of corn, raspberries, or tomatoes, planted and harvested by your children each year and sold to your neighbors, will in time yield enough to make a major contribution to a mission or a college education fund. Go out in your garages and look over the *unused* bicycles, toy cars, athletic equipment, skis, roller blades, et cetera, and calculate what the return would have been had the cost of these items been invested in future needs. Remember, I emphasized *unused* articles. How many of you have seen garages so full of things that there is no longer room for the car?

Avoid unnecessary debt

Third, avoid excessive debt. Necessary debt should be incurred only after

careful, thoughtful prayer and after obtaining the best possible advice. We need the discipline to stay well within our ability to pay. Wisely we have been counseled to avoid debt as we would avoid the plague. President J. Reuben Clark fearlessly and repeatedly counseled members of the Church to take action:

"Live within your means. Get out of debt. Keep out of debt. Lay by for a rainy day which has always come and will come again. Practice and increase your habits of thrift, industry, economy, and frugality" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1937, p. 107). We should have displayed in a prominent place President Clark's description of interest:

"Interest never sleeps nor sickens nor dies. . . . Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1938, p. 103).

Incurrence of debt is such an enticement. Accompanying the ease with which we can obtain debt should be the great caution of avoidance. Take the opportunity to compute how much you would add to your personal net worth if your home mortgage was only for ten or fifteen years instead of thirty. Compute the value of sweat equity if your time and your talents are invested in adding to the size and comfort of your home.

It is so easy to allow consumer debt to get out of hand. If you do not have the discipline to control the use of credit cards, it is better not to have them. A well-managed family does not pay interest—it earns it. The definition I received from a wise boss at one time in my early business career was "Thems that understands interest receives it, thems that don't pays it."

Store a reserve of food and supplies

Fourth, acquire and store a reserve of food and supplies that will sustain life. Obtain clothing and build a savings account on a sensible, well-planned basis that can serve well in times of emergency. As long as I can remember, we have been taught to prepare for the future and to obtain a year's supply of necessities. I would guess that the years of plenty have almost universally caused us to set aside this counsel. I believe the time to disregard this counsel is over. With events in the world today, it must be considered with all seriousness.

Prepare for less prosperous times

Careers are ever changing. They tell me that young people entering the work force today will have major career changes maybe three or four times during their work life. Job changes will occur even more frequently, even ten to twelve times during a life's work cycle. I know of no other way to prepare for these times of adjustment than to be certain that during times of employment, preparations are made for less prosperous times, should they occur. Start now to create a plan if you don't already have one, or update your present plan. Watch for best buys that will fit into your year's supply. We are not in a situation that requires panic buying, but we do need to be careful in purchasing and rotating the storage that we're putting away. The instability in the world today makes it imperative that we take heed of the counsel and prepare for the future.

Hold to the iron rod

President Lee, in commenting on Lehi's great vision, said this:

"If there is any one thing most needed in this time of tumult and frustration, when men and women and youth and young adults are desperately seek-

ing for answers to the problems which afflict mankind, it is an 'iron rod' as a safe guide along the straight path on the way to eternal life, amidst the strange and devious roadways that would eventually lead to destruction and to the ruin of all that is 'virtuous, lovely, or of good report'" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 90; or *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 7).

Unfortunately there are too many of us that are like the scoffers in Lehi's vision. They stand aloof and are inclined to hold in derision the faithful who have chosen to accept Church authorities as God's special witnesses of the gospel and His agents in directing the affairs of the Church. My sincere counsel to you today is to remember the good basic principles we have been taught from the very beginning—principles of thrift, industry, and integrity that have served mankind in every period of time. Avoid the great and spacious building that is the pride of the world, for it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof.

May God bless us with the wisdom to follow the counsel we have received as we prepare spiritually and temporally for the strength and security of our family units, in my humble prayer in the name

of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has been our concluding speaker.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will convene in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight saving time.

The nationwide CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. daylight saving time. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast.

We express our deep gratitude to the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region for the beautiful music we have heard this afternoon.

The choir will now sing in closing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder W. Don Ladd of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder W. Don Ladd offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, September 30, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus. Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session. These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, and loca-

tions in many countries throughout the world.

There are approximately 2,360 elders viewing these proceedings at the Provo Missionary Training Center.

Elders L. Tom Perry, James M. Parimore, and Gary J. Coleman are on the stand in the Assembly Hall; D. Todd Christofferson and Han In Sang in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building; and Stephen Nadauld and Max Caldwell in the BYU Marriott Center.

We announce that at this afternoon's session, Elders Ted E. Brewerton and Hans B. Ringger were given emeritus status. Elders Eduardo Ayala, LeGrand R. Curtis, Helvécio Martins, J Ballard Washburn, and Durrel A. Woolsey were released from their service as Seventies. Elders Jack H Goaslind and Harold G. Hillam were sustained as Presidents of the Seventy, succeeding Rex D. Pinegar and Charles Didier. Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, and Glenn L. Pace were sustained to succeed Elders Charles Didier, J Ballard Washburn, and F. Burton Howard as the general Sunday School presidency. I suppose I should also announce that Brigham Young University won its football game today.

The singing during this session will be furnished by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brothers Donald Ripplinger and Robert Bowden, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We will begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Awake, My Sons, Awake." I think we should have delayed that until the middle of my talk! After the singing, Elder Earl C. Tingey of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Awake, My Sons, Awake."

Elder Earl C. Tingey offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Thy Servants Are Prepared," and then we shall hear from Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir sang "Thy Servants Are Prepared."

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Called to touch lives

I am grateful that we are assembled as the priesthood of God tonight, presided over by the prophet who holds and exercises the keys of the holy priesthood in all the world. President Hinckley spoke in the Sunday morning session of conference last April. Near the end of that talk, he said this: "Now, my brethren and sisters, in conclusion I wish to leave with you one thought which I hope you will never forget."

With that introduction, which surely caught our attention, he then said:

"This church does not belong to its President. Its head is the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name each of us has taken upon ourselves. We are all in this great endeavor together. We are here to assist our Father in His work and His glory, 'to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man' (Moses 1:39). Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said:

"Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees' (D&C 81:5)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 94; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 71).

You must have wondered about that idea that your calling carries for you as serious a responsibility as his does for him. But you can see why that must be so. You and he are called by the same Savior, whose church this is. You are involved in the same work, which is to help the Lord bring to pass the eternal life of man. In your calling you touch lives. The life you touch in your service will be as valuable to God as any other life. And so how you touch a life is as serious a matter for you as it would be for any other servant of God.

That seriousness comes from your assigned purpose. Your responsibility is to touch people so that they will make the choices that will take them toward eternal life. And eternal life is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

A deacon touches a life

Some of you young men may feel uncomfortable with the thought that what may seem to you simple assignments or everyday acts could have eternal consequences. But you may have done more than you know. Your deacons quorum president next week may ask you to invite to come with you to a Sunday meeting a boy who has never attended, nor has anyone in his family. You may trudge up to his house, get him to come with you a few times, and then see him move away. You may think you haven't done much that mattered. But the grandfather of such a boy came up to me during a stake conference, described in detail how a deacon had done just that for his grandson—more than ten years before and almost a continent away—and with tears in his eyes asked me if

I could thank that deacon for him, now grown older, unaware that the Savior had reached out through a twelve-year-old servant assigned by a thirteen-year-old quorum president.

Some of you brethren know the feelings of that grandfather. The mother of his grandson was raising him alone with no contact with the Church. The grandfather had tried every way he knew to reach out to touch their lives. He loved them. He felt responsible for her and for his grandson. And he knew what you know: He knew that someday, when they saw things as they really are, they would wish with all their hearts that they had made the choices that would qualify them for eternal life, choices which won't and can't be made without faith in Jesus Christ sufficient to salvation.

His heartache was one most of us have felt over someone we cared about and could not seem to reach. And that heartache will lead you to ponder and pray for the answer to this question: How can I touch a life with faith?

Help others increase their faith

A place to begin your pondering is with the Savior and His disciples. Early in His mortal ministry, they wanted Him to touch their lives with faith.

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

"And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:5-6).

You will not be surprised that the Lord responded by speaking of a seed. The first thing to know about how faith in Him increases is to think of its growth like that of a tree. You remember how Alma used that illustration. The seed is the word of God. It must be planted in the heart of the person you serve and

whose faith you want to see increase. He described what must happen this way:

"Now, we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.

"Now behold, would not this increase your faith? I say unto you, Yea" (Alma 32:28–29).

Just as soil needs preparation for a seed, so does a human heart for the word of God to take root. Before he told the people to plant the seed, Alma told them that their hearts were prepared. They had been persecuted and cast out of their churches.

Alma, with his love, and the circumstances of their lives, which led them to be humble, had prepared them. They were then ready to hear the word of God. If they chose to plant it in their hearts, the growth in their souls would surely follow, and that would increase their faith.

Help others want to obey

It's not hard to see from these examples what you can do to touch someone's life with faith. To begin with, you recognize that what people choose to do, and what the Savior has done, will matter more than what you do. But there are things you can do to make it more likely that they will make the choices that will move them toward eternal life.

You know first of all that to plant the seed, they must do more than hear the word of God. They have to try it by

keeping commandments. The Lord said it this way:

"Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16–17).

It won't be enough for them simply to listen to the word of God. They must choose to keep commandments because they feel at least a beginning desire to know the will of our Heavenly Father and submit to it. That feeling of surrender is not likely to come unless they experience some feeling of being loved and some value in their being meek and lowly of heart.

You can help with your example. If you love them because you feel God's love for them, they will feel that. If you are meek and humble because you feel your dependence on God, they will sense that too.

Teach with love, as Aaron did

In addition to your example, you can teach the word of God to them in a way that is more likely to give them a desire to repent and to try to live it. They may think they have heard preaching enough. But they must do more than hear the word of God; they must plant it in their hearts by trying it.

You can make that more likely if you talk with them about it in a way that helps them feel how much God loves them and how much they need God.

Aaron, one of the great missionaries in the Book of Mormon, knew how to teach that way. You remember how he taught King Lamoni's father, the old king.

The king's heart had already been prepared by seeing love and humility in the way Aaron's brother had treated Lamoni, the king's son. But even with that preparation of the old king's heart,

Aaron taught the word of God in a way that emphasizes God's love and our need for Him. Listen to this description of how he did it:

"And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.

"And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name" (Alma 22:12–13).

You won't very often have the remarkable result that Aaron had. After hearing the word of God taught that way, in what the scriptures sometimes call the plan of happiness, the old king said that he would give whatever he had to root the wickedness out of him and have eternal life. When Aaron told him to cry to God in prayer for forgiveness, the king bowed down on the spot. The seed was planted. He was doing the will of God (see vv. 15–18).

Help others plant the seed

When you touch the hearts of people you serve, you won't do everything exactly the way Aaron did. But you will do some of the same things. You will try to help them feel that God loves them by the way you treat them. You will be humble so that they are more likely to choose to be meek and lowly of heart. You will teach the word of God, when the Spirit prompts you, in a way that testifies of God's love for them and their need for the atonement of Jesus Christ. And you will teach them commandments they can keep. That is why, when you go into the mission field, you learn to com-

mit those you teach to pray or to read the Book of Mormon or to come with you to a sacrament meeting or to be baptized. You know that when they keep commandments, they plant the seed. And you know that it will grow, their souls will be expanded, and that when that happens their faith will increase.

Teach when hearts are prepared

You not only know what to do but you know when the Spirit is apt to prompt you to do it. The times people will be most likely to choose to try the word of God, to repent, will be when they feel at least the beginnings of His love for them and their dependence on Him.

For instance, wise bishops have learned that funerals can be such times. When death occurs in a family, the bishop, quorum members, and the home and visiting teachers reach out to the family because they love them. The family generally feels humbled, longing for comfort and peace. For many, their hearts will be prepared to hear the word of God.

The bishop will know that as he plans the funeral service. He will be sure that testimony is given of the plan of salvation, of the atonement of Jesus Christ, of the Resurrection, and of glorious reunions, because that will bring comfort and hope. But such teaching will do more than that. The word of God will be heard by people with hearts softened by love and by grief and so more likely to choose living it more fully. And from doing that, faith will increase and the changes will come in people which move them toward eternal life.

Prove love by service

Your opportunities won't come only at times of great tragedy or overwhelming need. Life has in it moments of challenge that will bring even the people most hardened to spiritual things to say

to themselves, "Isn't there more than this?" If you have been a constant friend, if you have proved your love by service and so become trusted, they may turn to you with that question. When they do, you can say, knowing that their hearts are prepared, "Yes, there is, and I can tell you where it is and what you can do to find it."

Your teaching will become easier as those you serve try the word of God. For instance, a deacon or an elder might choose to follow the command to search the scriptures and so read passages that tell him of the honor and glory bestowed through the holy priesthood (D&C 124:34). From such obedience in reading scriptures, he might be able to hear the Holy Ghost whisper that such an honor, such a holy calling deserves wearing better than everyday clothes when he performs priesthood ordinances or more considerate speech wherever he is. Because others may not honor the dignity of the priesthood in those ways, such obedience may take faith. But faith, when exercised, increases. And that increase in faith will give greater power to hear and to obey.

Refresh and nurture others' faith

Now, you will have great moments in your service to others as they discover the source of faith or when that faith leads them to go through the pain of repentance to gain the peace of forgiveness.

But even people with faith developed by obedience and with sins washed away will need your help to refresh and strengthen their faith. There are reasons for that. Blessings when they are no longer seen as coming from our Heavenly Father can lead to pride. The peace of forgiveness can lead to overconfidence, forgetting to pray always lest we be overcome. Even some who have exercised faith enough to have great spiritual experiences have later been deceived

into apostasy or overcome with the trials of life. All of them need your help in nurturing faith, in learning to put all their trust in God.

For all those you serve, wherever they may be in the tests of life, the way you nurture will be much the same. You will love them. You will encourage them as they choose to be humble. You will present the word of God to them in the way most likely to lead to their choosing to exercise enough faith to repent and thus see that there is more that God would have them do. And that will help them endure in faith.

The Lord will make you fishers of men

Now, your responsibility to touch lives might seem overwhelming. You can take heart that you were called by the Savior. You have the same promise He gave those He called at the beginning of His earthly ministry. He called first humble men, uneducated, with less schooling and less gospel knowledge than the most recently ordained of you may have. But listen to what He said, and know that it applies to you:

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

"And they straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matthew 4:18-20).

He will make you a fisher of men, however inadequate you may feel now. It won't be done by a mysterious process. It will be the natural result of your choosing to follow Him. Just think about what you must do to be a fisher of men, to touch lives with faith for Him. You will need to love the people you serve. You will need to be humble and full of hope. You will need to have the Holy Ghost as your companion to know when to speak and what to say and how to testify.

But all of that will come naturally, in time, from the covenants you make and keep as you follow Him. Here is the description of how that will happen, from the eighth chapter of Moroni, the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses:

"And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;

"And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God."

You may not have seen that mighty change in yourself yet. But it will come as you continue to follow Him. You can trust that He will qualify you as His servant, to assist Him in touching lives with

faith to bring to pass the eternal life of man. And you will find satisfaction in that service beyond your fondest dreams.

I testify that God the Father lives and that He loves you. I testify that Jesus is the Christ, that He called you, and that He atoned for your sins and those of all you will ever serve. I testify that President Gordon B. Hinckley holds the keys that allow us to offer to our Father's children the covenants and ordinances that can qualify them for eternal life. And I pray with all my heart that we may touch lives with faith enough to repent and to make and keep those sacred covenants. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy, and he will be followed by Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presidency of the Bishopric.

Elder Harold G. Hillam

Sacrifice in missionary service

As I look at you this evening, I can see many young men with their valiant fathers and loyal priesthood leaders seated side by side. These fathers and leaders are ready to pay the price, yes, even sacrifice, for the success of you young men.

In the spirit of sacrifice, I recall a conversation I had some years ago with my stake president in Idaho. We were discussing the forthcoming Aaronic Priesthood-Scout campout. I explained to him that it would be necessary for each person to bring his own sleeping bag, to which the president replied, "I have never slept in a sleeping bag."

I quickly responded, "President, you can't be serious. You have lived in beautiful Idaho all these years and you have never slept in a sleeping bag?"

"Nope!" he said, "I never have. But I have sure lain in a lot of 'em." And then he went on to say, "And I'll lie in a whole bunch more of them if it will help to save boys."

The sacrifice I would like to speak to you about is the sacrifice that accompanies missionary service. Since the beginning of time our Heavenly Father has called worthy servants to go into the world to proclaim the gospel and to testify of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Many of those who have fulfilled their callings have done so with considerable sacrifice.

Sacrifices of Mosiah's missionary sons

Let me tell you of four who served their missions long ago. They were Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, sons of Mosiah, the king. They had become so powerfully converted they wanted everyone to hear the gospel message. From the Book of Mormon we read:

"They were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble" (Mosiah 28:3).

They pled with their father that they might go and do missionary work among the Lamanites. Now Mosiah feared for his sons' safety in the land of their enemy.

"And king Mosiah went and inquired of the Lord if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word" (v. 6).

The first part of the Lord's answer might not have been exactly what Mosiah wanted to hear:

"The Lord said unto Mosiah: Let them go up" (v. 7). But then follow three marvelous promises: the first, "For many shall believe on their words"; and the second, "I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites"; and then the third, "They shall have eternal life" (v. 7).

Now He did not promise them great wealth, but He did promise the greatest of all the gifts of God, *eternal life*! Can you imagine a more marvelous promise for faithful missionaries?

The four missionary sons of Mosiah did not choose the easy course. Their choice was neither convenient nor popular: They gave up the kingship. "Mosiah had no one to confer the kingdom upon" (v. 10)—they were all on missions. Serving a mission wasn't necessarily accepted. They were ridiculed even by other members of the Church. Ammon recalls the experience: "Now do ye remember, my

brethren, that we said unto our brethren in the land of Zarahemla, we go up to the land of Nephi, to preach unto our brethren, the Lamanites, and they *laughed us to scorn*?" (Alma 26:23; italics added). Their choice to serve a mission was not one of convenience. Ammon spoke of the challenges they encountered: "We have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and smote upon our cheeks; . . . and taken and bound with strong cords, and cast into prison." However, Ammon continues, "through the power and wisdom of God we have been delivered again" (v. 29).

They were not easy missions, but thousands were converted.

Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball

Now let's look to another set of missionaries closer to our time, the time of the Restoration. There was considerable persecution from enemies in and outside the Church. At a time when it appeared that the Prophet needed them at home, two of the Apostles, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, were called on foreign missions. The following is Elder Heber C. Kimball's historic account of the pathetic setting at his departure:

"I went to the bed and shook hands with my wife, who was shaking with the ague, having two children lying sick by her side; I embraced her and my children, and bid them farewell; the only child well was little Heber Parley, and it was with difficulty he could carry a two-quart pail full of water from a spring at the bottom of a small hill to assist in quenching their thirst. It was with difficulty we got into the wagon and started down the hill about ten rods; it appeared to me as though my very inmost parts would melt within me; leaving my family in such a condition, as it were, almost in the arms of death; it seemed to me as though I could not endure it. I said to the teamster, 'Hold up.' Said I to Brother Brigham, 'This is pretty tough, ain't it?

Let's rise up and give them a cheer.' We arose and swinging our hats three times over our heads, we cried 'Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah for Israel!' Vilate [Kimball] hearing the noise arose from her bed and came to the door; she had a smile on her face and she and Mary Ann Young cried out to us, 'Good bye, God bless you.' We returned the compliment and then told the driver to go ahead. After this I felt a spirit of joy and gratitude at having the satisfaction of seeing my wife standing upon her feet, instead of leaving her in bed, knowing as I did that I should not see them again for two or more years" (quoted in Helen Mar Whitney, "Life Incidents," *Woman's Exponent*, 15 July 1880, p. 25). This was one of four missions that these two Apostle missionaries served.

Elder Bugs's sacrifice

Now to the present for an interview I had with a handsome zone leader in the Brazil São Paulo Interlagos Mission. I said to the missionary, "Tell me about your family." He then relayed the following. He was born into a wealthy family. His father had a responsible position in a multinational corporation. They moved from Brazil to Venezuela. He was one of seven children, all members of the Church.

When the missionary was fifteen years old, his father was shot and killed by a fleeing thief. In a family council it was decided to return to Brazil and invest their savings in the purchase of a small home. A year and a half later, the mother informed the children that she had been diagnosed with cancer. The family used valuable savings to help pay the medical expenses—but to no avail. Six months later the mother passed away, leaving the young family alone.

Our young missionary, Elder Bugs (pronounced Boogs), then sixteen years old, went to work, first selling clothing, then later computer supplies. He used

his hard-earned money to support the young family. He said, "We were always blessed to have enough to eat. I would work during the day, then help the children with their studies at night. I especially miss my little sister. I taught her to read."

Elder Bugs continued, "Then the bishop invited me to come in for an interview. He called me on a mission. I told him I would need to speak with my family first. In our family council they reminded me that Dad had always taught us that we should be prepared to serve the Lord as full-time missionaries. I accepted the call. When I received my letter from the prophet, I withdrew all my savings. I bought a new suit, a pair of pants, white shirts and ties, and a new pair of shoes. I gave the rest of the money to the bishop (enough for about four months of support for the family). I hugged my little family and left for my mission."

I looked at that brave young man and I said, "But, Elder, with you away, who is taking care of your family?"

"Oh," he said, "my brother is sixteen. He is the same age I was when our mother died. He is taking care of the family now."

I had an opportunity recently to talk by telephone with Elder Bugs. He has been home from his mission for six months now. When I asked him how he was doing, he said, "I have a good job again and I am caring for the family, but oh, how I miss my mission. It was the greatest thing I have ever done. I am now helping my younger brother prepare for his mission."

No sacrifice is too great for the Master

Why have these great missionaries and others like them been willing to sacrifice the comforts of home, family, loved ones, and sweethearts to answer the call to serve? It's because they have a testimony of Jesus Christ. And when they know Him there is no bed too short

or too hard, no climate too hot or too cold, no food too different or language so strange that they are unwilling to serve Him. No sacrifice is too great to serve the Master, who sacrificed His all to provide the way for His brothers and sisters to return home to their Heavenly Father. And because they are faithful to their callings, thousands will revere their names throughout the eternities.

I testify there is no more majestic call than to be in the full-time service of our Redeemer, to help to bring our Heavenly Father's children to the knowledge of Him who has made eternal life possible. I pray that every able young man—and every able couple—will join those who have paid the price to serve a full-time mission. And this I pray in the name of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop H. David Burton

Brethren, I am honored and humbled to share this historic podium with others of the General Authorities, particularly the fifteen prophets, seers, and revelators seated behind me, whom I love and revere. I bear witness that these mighty men of God, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, have been prepared, refined, tested, and called to preside over and to give direction to this expansive priesthood labor.

An “I will” attitude

There is a sign prominently displayed in a shopping mall in Manila, the Philippines, that reads, “Your ‘I will’ is more important than your ‘IQ.’” As I ponder the meaning of that short phrase, there comes to mind the chorus of the great Primary song based on 1 Nephi 3:7: “I will go; I will do the thing the Lord commands. I know the Lord provides a way; he wants me to obey” (“Nephi’s Courage,” *Children’s Songbook*, pp. 120–21). I also find myself humming and whistling the refrain from the celebrated hymn of the Restoration: “I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord . . . ; I’ll say what you want me to say . . . ; I’ll be what you want me to be” (“I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go,” *Hymns*, no. 270).

Far too many who have been blessed with great ability and exceptional intellect fail to have an “I will” attitude when

it comes to going, doing, saying, and being what the Lord commands.

I will go, I will do, I will say, and I will be all convey determined obedience. Our third article of faith states, “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” Certainly the most magnificent act of obedience was accomplished in Gethsemane. You may recall the heartfelt plea of the Savior: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

“I wills” for priesthood holders

For us who bear the priesthood of God, there are many important “I wills”: *I will* be loyal to the oath and covenant of the priesthood; *I will* be responsive to my quorum president; *I will* exhibit perfect fidelity to the covenants made in holy places; and, *I will* serve with excellence in my Aaronic Priesthood ministry, preparing myself for further priesthood service. Possibly the most significant “I will” we all could commit to this night is *I will* follow the living prophets.

Commit to follow the living prophet

Brigham Young said, “You cannot destroy the appointment of a prophet of

God, but you can cut the thread that binds you to the prophet of God, and sink yourselves to hell" (quoted by Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Apr. 1963, p. 81; or *Improvement Era*, June 1963, p. 501).

Elder John A. Widtsoe said: "The most important prophet in any age is the living prophet. . . . To follow the living prophet, the interpreter of the past, is the essence of wisdom. The very strength of the Church lies in the doctrine of continuous revelation through a living prophet" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3 vols. in 1, arr. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960], p. 352).

President Wilford Woodruff recalled a meeting at which the Prophet Joseph Smith said to Brigham Young, "Brother Brigham I want you to take the stand and tell us your views with regard to the written oracles and the written word of God." Brigham Young is reported to have laid the scriptures, one by one, before him and then indicated he felt the words of the living prophet were more important than the writings before him because the words of the living oracles convey the word of God to us in our day. President Woodruff went on to say, "When he was through, Brother Joseph said to the congregation: 'Brother Brigham has told you the word of the Lord, and he has told you the truth'" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1897, pp. 22-23).

How are we doing in obeying the living prophets? Do you recall their counsel just six months ago in the last general priesthood meeting? For example, do you remember President Faust saying: "There is no greater responsibility than that of being a husband and a father, from which there is no release. . . . 'Love thy wife with all thy heart, and . . . cleave unto her and none else' [D&C 42:22]"? (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 63; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 46).

Can you remember President Monson's fervent request: "Brethren of the priesthood, the world is in need of your

help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. . . . Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service"? (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 67; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 49).

Young men, oh, I hope the magnificent counsel of President Hinckley continues to ring in your ears: "You cannot indulge in any unbecoming behavior without injury to the beauty of the fabric of your lives. Immoral acts of any kind will introduce an ugly thread. Dishonesty of any kind will create a blemish. Foul and profane language will rob the pattern of its beauty" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, p. 73; or *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 53).

Become acquainted with Nephi

Young men who hold the priesthood of Aaron, may I offer an "I will" for your serious consideration? It is *I will* become very well acquainted with the noble prophet Nephi through studying, pondering, and feasting upon the first two books of the Book of Mormon. My young friends, I promise that when you come to really know Nephi, you will be so impressed with his determination, courage, and desire to be obedient to the "things the Lord commands" that you will have a strong desire to incorporate his attributes into your own lives. Then when you are tempted by the adversary, as you may be nearly every day, to deviate from the counsel of the prophets, the wishes of your parents, or what "the Lord commands," you can immediately have the words of stalwart Nephi automatically come to your mind: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded" (1 Nephi 3:7). And when someone with whom you associate suggests you participate in something that is not as "the Lord commands," you can think of the courageous plea Nephi made to his elder brothers: "Let us be faithful

in keeping the commandments of the Lord" (v. 16).

Young athletes honor the Sabbath

I am aware of a group of courageous young men who followed the example of Nephi. After winning a baseball state championship for their age-group, their team, made up mostly of Aaronic Priesthood holders, was invited to represent their state in a tournament to be held in a distant location. Upon arriving at the tournament site, they learned that some of the games were scheduled to be played on the Sabbath day. Each of these young men had to make a difficult personal decision: would he support the team, including several nonmember team members; or if scheduled on Sunday, would he follow what "the Lord commands" in keeping the Sabbath day holy? Their honoring the Sabbath day could mean the team would forfeit their chances of winning the tournament. One by one they quietly approached the coaches, and following the example of Nephi they independently chose to decline participation on the Sabbath day. As it turned out, when Sunday arrived the team's record, coupled with adverse weather conditions, interrupted the schedule. I have had occasion to closely follow these young men over the years. They have continued to pattern their lives after the sterling example of Nephi. They have gone on missions, and they continue to strive to do and say what the Lord has commanded.

A baseball player's perseverance

A few weeks ago I, like perhaps many of you, witnessed on television a long-standing baseball record broken—a record once thought unbreakable. Tears rolled down my cheeks as I watched this fine athlete who broke the record stand on the field with his family and receive accolades of the public and his team. Although I am impressed with this young

man's ability to hit and field a baseball, I am far more impressed with the attributes he displayed in achieving that feat. He demonstrated great perseverance, constancy, sacrifice, courage, and determination in reaching his goal. These are some of the attributes we need to help us be successful in going, doing, and saying as "the Lord commands."

Make family leadership top priority

You adult brethren, may I suggest an "I will" for us which has been repeatedly emphasized by modern prophets? It is of critical importance in today's world, where the influence of the adversary is intensifying and the foundation of our society, the family, is disintegrating. It is *I will* resolve that the leadership of my family will be my most important and sacred responsibility; and *I will* not leave the teaching and governance of my family to society, to the school, or to the Church. We are reminded in the Doctrine and Covenants that fathers and mothers are held accountable by the Lord to teach their children about faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, and the need to pray and walk uprightly before the Lord (see D&C 68:25, 28).

Perhaps you have heard some say, "I am so busy with living and providing that I have little time to devote to my family, but I make an effort to see that my limited time is quality time." Brethren, this type of rationalization is severely flawed. Effective family leadership requires both quantity and quality time.

When I was called to be bishop of our ward, our young four-year-old son inquired of me, "Are you the guy they give those envelopes of money to?" I answered, "Yes, I am the one," realizing that we needed a little lesson on tithing. Brandon clapped his hands and exclaimed, "Oh goody, we're going to be rich!" We later learned he was thinking that Dad no longer would have to work

and would therefore have lots more time for him!

If giving your family quantity time means focusing less on providing the "wants" in life or putting aside nonfamily involvement with fishing poles, golf clubs, boats, trips, and so on, those things should be done immediately. Brethren, we need desperately to recommit to this extremely important "I will." May we never be too busy to do the things that matter most: to preside in righteousness in our homes and follow, unconditionally, the counsel of living prophets.

Align our wills with God's will

Brethren, I pray we may often recall, and perhaps even hum and sing, that simple but infectious Primary song: "I will go; I will do the thing the Lord commands. I know the Lord provides a way; he wants me to obey." May we focus and align our "I wills" with His will. I testify

that the Lord wants us to obey the living prophets. I further testify that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ lives. He is our Savior and our Redeemer. He has, upon the principles of our repentance, atoned for our sins. I testify that this is so, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Harold G. Hillam of the Presidency of the Seventy has addressed us, followed by Bishop H. David Burton, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top." President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

President James E. Faust

Dangers of living on the edge

It is always a sacred responsibility to address the great body of the priesthood of this church. This evening I wish to speak primarily to the splendid young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I do so because I recognize that the future of the Church and even the world depends upon how you young men regard and honor your priesthood.

Recently I asked some special young people what I should know about your generation. One young man spoke for the group and said, "We live on the edge." Since that time I have thought a lot about what it means to live on the edge. Of course it can mean many things. I think my fine young friend was referring to hazardous motorcycling, cliff climbing, and other forms of recreation

which may involve taking unnecessary risks to produce a challenge or a thrill.

Some years ago Elder Marion D. Hanks told about a group of Boy Scouts who went cave exploring. The narrow trail was marked with white stones and lighted in sections as they went. After about an hour they came to a huge, high dome. Below it lay an area called the Bottomless Pit, so called because the floor of the cave had collapsed into a deep, gaping hole. It was hard not to jostle each other on that narrow path. Pretty soon one of the bigger boys accidentally pushed a smaller boy into a muddy area away from the light. Terrified as he lost his footing, he screamed in the darkness. The ranger heard his cry of terror and came quickly. The boy let out another cry as the beam of the ranger's light showed that he was right on the very edge of the pit.¹

In this story the boy was rescued. But this does not always happen. So many times young people are enticed to go to the very edge or even beyond it. With only a precarious toehold, it is easy to be seriously injured or even die. Life is too precious to throw away in the name of excitement or, as Jacob said in the Book of Mormon, "looking beyond the mark."²

You young people may think that you are indestructible and that you are going to live forever. In a few years you will learn that this is not so. Living on the edge can also mean being perilously close to the Bottomless Pit. Of even more danger is to put your souls at risk by dabbling in drugs or other mind-abusing substances to "get a buzz."

Some of you may think that you will discover your strengths and abilities by living on the edge. Perhaps you also think it is a way to find your identity or manliness. Your identity, however, cannot be found from thrill seeking, such as intentionally and unnecessarily exposing your life or your soul to any kind of danger, physical or moral. There will always be enough risks that will come to you naturally without your having to seek them out. Your strength and identity will come from honoring your priesthood, developing your talents, and serving the Lord. Each of you will have to work very hard to qualify for your eternal potential. It will not be easy. Finding your true identity will tax your ability far beyond climbing a dangerous cliff or speeding in a car or on a motorcycle. It will require all of your strength, stamina, intelligence, and courage.

The best counsel I ever received about staying away from the edge came when President Harold B. Lee called me, as a young married man, to be a member of a bishopric. He said, "From now on, you must not only avoid evil, but also the appearance of evil." He did not interpret that counsel. That was left to my conscience.

Act rather than be acted upon

That brings me to an important point that I wish to make this evening to the priesthood of God. Each of us must take the responsibility for the moral decisions we make in life about how close we live to the edge. Nephi states, "And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon."³ Being acted upon means somebody else is pulling the strings.

We live in a time when many want to avoid the responsibility for their acts. When I was a young lawyer, I was appointed by the judges to defend persons who were charged with infractions of the law. One time I was assigned to represent a young man. As we approached the bench, the venerable old federal judge looked down at both of us and asked, "Which one of you is the accused?" From these experiences I learned that some individuals did not think they were responsible or guilty in any way even though they had violated a law. They felt they were not to be blamed. They had abdicated their consciences. They may have committed the wrongful act, but they felt it was really their parents' fault because they were not properly taught, or it was society's fault because they were never given a chance in life. So often they had some reason or excuse for blaming their actions on someone or something else rather than accepting the responsibility for their own actions. They did not act for themselves but were acted upon.

Mickey Mantle, American baseball star of many years ago, recently admitted to years of various forms of substance abuse. Upon receiving a liver transplant in an effort to save his life, he made an amazing statement. He said, "Don't use me for a role model." He also said that he was committing the rest of his life to being a better example. Mickey Mantle finally accepted the responsibility for his

mistakes. Unfortunately he died shortly thereafter.

In World War II, many of us went through officers' training. We were taught that the only appropriate answer when we made a life-threatening mistake was, "No excuse, sir."

Joseph F. Smith stands firm

Each of us must at times courageously and firmly stand up for what we are and what we believe. When President Joseph F. Smith was a young man, he was faced with this predicament:

"One morning when he and several other missionaries were returning to Salt Lake City, a group of rough Mormon-haters rode up on horses, firing their guns and cursing.

"The leader jumped off his horse and shouted, 'We will kill anyone who is a Mormon!' The other missionaries had fled into the woods, but Joseph F. bravely stood his ground. The man shoved a gun in Joseph F.'s face and asked, 'Are you a Mormon?'

"Joseph F. stood tall and said, 'Yes siree; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through!'

"The man was surprised at his reply. He put the gun away, shook Joseph's hand, and said, 'Well, you are the pleasantest man I ever met! I'm glad to see a fellow stand up for his convictions.' He jumped back on his horse and rode off with his companions."⁴

Unlike Joseph F. Smith, the danger you young men face is not so much physical; but rather it is the danger of being personally deceived and misled. This danger is, in some ways, more subtle and difficult and requires more strength and courage than facing physical danger.

Avoid even the appearance of evil

Staying away from the edge is an individual responsibility. Occasionally our well-meaning young people want every

detail of appropriate and inappropriate conduct to be specified, perhaps so they can feel comfortable in getting closer to the edge. They sometimes seem more concerned with what the gospel prohibits than what it gives. For instance, some young adults were surprised when they learned that it was inappropriate for mixed young single adult groups to be involved together in overnight activities. They said, "Why hasn't the prophet told us?" The Church counsel in this matter has been clear for many years. It should not have been necessary to tell these young people to avoid the appearance of evil. My strong advice is, if there is any question about your personal conduct, don't do it. It is the responsibility of prophets to teach the word of God—not to spell out every jot and tittle of human behavior. Our moral agency requires us to know good from evil and choose the good. If we are trying to avoid not only evil but the very appearance of evil, we will act for ourselves and not be acted upon.

Provide safety for women and children

Holders of the priesthood of God are not only to be accountable for their own acts, but are to provide moral and physical safety for the women and children of their families and of the Church. You young single men who hold the priesthood and are dating the splendid young ladies of the Church have a duty to do everything you can to protect their physical safety and virtue. The priesthood you hold gives you the greater responsibility to see that the high moral standards of the Church are always maintained. The Lord knows that you know better than to approach the edge of sexual enticement. You will lose part of that which is sacred about you if you go beyond the edge and abuse the great powers of procreation. Each of us is accountable for his own actions. How can any of us hope to play a great role in

time or eternity if we have no power of self-control?

How to satisfy internal emptiness

Some thrill seekers seem to be trying to satisfy an internal emptiness through the external gratification of alcohol, drugs, and illicit sexual relations. To ease their consciences, some vainly wait for the Church to "get modern," to "wake up," or to "get with the times." That internal emptiness can be filled only by making our relationship with "God the center of our being," as President David O. McKay taught:

"It is not an easy thing to make God the center of our being. To do so we must determine to keep his commandments. Spiritual attainment, not physical possessions, not the indulgence and the gratification of the body, must become the *chief goal*.

"Only in the complete surrender of our inner life may we rise above the selfish, sordid pull of nature. . . . As the body dies when the spirit leaves it, so the spirit dies when we exclude God from it. I cannot imagine peace in a world from which God and religion are banished."⁵

Getting the power of God into your life

The Lord has a great work for each of us to do. You may wonder how this can be. You may feel that there is nothing special or superior about you or your ability. Perhaps you feel or have been told that you are stupid. Many of us have felt that, and some of us have been told that. Gideon felt this when the Lord asked him to save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon said, "My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."⁶ He had only three hundred men, but with the help of the Lord, Gideon defeated the armies of the Midianites.⁷

The Lord can do remarkable miracles with a person of ordinary ability who

is humble, faithful, and diligent in serving the Lord and seeks to improve himself. This is because God is the ultimate source of power. By the gift of the Holy Ghost we can not only know all things but even "the truth of all things."⁸

Many of you worry about your future. I think every conscientious young man does. But you do not realize what opportunities lie ahead of you. After a lifetime of dealing with human affairs, I am persuaded that your future will be beyond your dreams if you observe the following:

1. Do not live on the edge.
2. Avoid not only evil but even the appearance of evil.
3. Follow the counsel of Nephi to act for yourselves and not be acted upon.
4. Seek first the kingdom of God and receive the great promise that all else will be added upon you.
5. Follow the counsel of Church leaders.

Chosen in the premortal existence

In this great hall and listening this evening are thousands of future leaders of the Church who have been called out of the world and chosen by the Lord before the foundations of the world, as described by Abraham:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

"And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born."⁹

I believe the Lord has brought forth special spirits who were reserved from before the world was to be strong and valiant in this difficult time of the world's

history. Upon you young men will soon rest the future of the kingdom of God on earth. In your time the challenges and opportunities will be greater than ever before.

With all my heart I urge you young men to be worthy and true to your priesthood callings in your youth. Yours is a preparatory priesthood now. If you remain worthy, soon the greater priesthood will be yours, and with it will come the great responsibility for the holy work of God in all the earth.

May you be equal to it, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Story adapted from "Questions for the Iconoclast," *Improvement Era*, June 1957, pp. 446-48.

2. Jacob 4:14.

3. 2 Nephi 2:26.

4. "Courageous Mormon Boy," *Friend*, Aug. 1995, p. 43.

5. *Gospel Ideals* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), p. 295; italics added.

6. Judges 6:15.

7. See Judges 7.

8. Moroni 10:5.

9. Abraham 3:22-23.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

Ye who are called to labor

It is no small undertaking to stand before you this evening. I am impressed by your faith, in awe of your potential, and inspired by your devotion to duty in the cause of the Master.

A dear personal friend and associate in the work of the Lord, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, had a favorite hymn which he enjoyed hearing sung. He said the words of the hymn prompted him to do his best. Listen to just two verses:

Ye who are called to labor and minister for God,
Blest with the royal priesthood, appointed by his word
To preach among the nations the news of gospel grace,
And publish on the mountains salvation, truth, and peace: . . .

The Comforter will teach you, his richest blessings send.
Your Savior will be with you forever to the end.¹

What a mighty promise these precious words proclaim. They apply to you young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood and to your fathers and other brethren who have received the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Learn as youth to choose the right

It seems like yesterday that I was secretary of the deacons quorum in my ward. We were tutored by wise and patient men who taught us from the holy scriptures, even men who knew us well. These men who took time to listen and to laugh, to build and to inspire, emphasized that we, like the Lord, could increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.² They were examples to us. Their lives were a reflection of their testimonies.

Youth is a time for growth. Our minds during these formative years are receptive to truth, but they are also receptive to error. The responsibility to choose rests with each deacon, teacher,

and priest. As the years go by, the choices become increasingly complex, and at times we may be tempted to waver. The need for a personal code of honor is demanded not only on a daily basis but frequently many times in a given day.

The counsel found in one of the hymns sung frequently in our meetings provides an inspired guide:

Choose the right when a choice is
placed before you.

In the right the Holy Spirit guides;
And its light is forever shining o'er
you,
When in the right your heart con-
fides.³

A spirit of determination to do the right thing can come in earliest boyhood. At the cemetery, following a lovely funeral I attended, there stood near the open grave a small lad. His face was one of innocence, and his shining eyes showed the promise of a bright future. I said to him, "You, my boy, are going to make a great missionary. How old are you?"

He answered, "Ten."

"In nine years we're going to be looking for you to serve a mission," I countered.

His response was immediate and told me something about him. He said, "Brother Monson, you won't have to look for me 'cause I'll be looking for you." Young men, some lessons in life are learned from your parents, while others you learn in school or in church. There are, however, certain moments when you know our Heavenly Father is doing the teaching and you are His student. Let me share with you tonight such a lesson, effectively taught and everlastingly learned. The lesson pertains to swimming but goes far beyond that skill.

Rescuing a woman from the Provo River

I learned to swim in the swift-running currents of the Provo River in beau-

tiful Provo Canyon. The "old swimming hole" was in a deep portion of the river, formed by a large rock which had fallen into the river, I assume, when the workmen constructing the railroad were blasting through the canyon. The pool was dangerous, what with its depth of sixteen feet, its current, which moved swiftly against the large rock, and the sucking action of the whirlpools below the rock. It was not a place for a novice or the inexperienced swimmer.

One warm summer afternoon when I was about twelve or thirteen, I took a large, inflated inner tube from a tractor tire, slung it over my shoulder, and walked barefoot up the railroad track which followed the course of the river. I entered the water about a mile above the swimming hole, sat comfortably in the tube, and enjoyed a leisurely float down the river. The river held no fear for me, for I knew its secrets.

That day the Greek-speaking people in Utah held a reunion at Vivian Park in Provo Canyon, as they did every year. Native food, games, and dances were the order of the day. But some left the party to try swimming in the river. When they arrived at the swimming hole, it was deserted, for afternoon shadows were beginning to envelop it.

As my inflated tube bobbed up and down, I was about to enter the swiftest portion of the river just at the head of the swimming hole when I heard frantic cries, "Save her! Save her!" A young lady swimmer, accustomed to the still waters of a gymnasium swimming pool, had fallen from the rock into the treacherous whirlpools. None of the party could swim to save her. Suddenly I appeared on the potentially tragic scene. I saw the top of her head disappearing under the water for the third time, there to descend to a watery grave. I stretched forth my hand, grasped her hair, and lifted her over the side of the tube and into my arms. At the pool's lower end, the water was slower as I paddled the tube, with my precious

cargo, to her waiting relatives and friends. They threw their arms around the water-soaked girl and kissed her, crying, "Thank God! Thank God you are safe!" Then they hugged and kissed me. I was embarrassed and quickly returned to the tube and continued my float down to the Vivian Park bridge. The water was frigid, but I was not cold, for I was filled with a warm feeling. I realized that I had participated in the saving of a life. Heavenly Father had heard the cries, "Save her! Save her," and permitted me, a deacon, to float by at precisely the time I was needed. That day I learned that the sweetest feeling in mortality is to realize that God, our Heavenly Father, knows each one of us and generously permits us to see and to share His divine power to save.

Follow the path to the celestial kingdom

Pray always in the performance of your priesthood responsibilities, and you will never be in the position of Alice in Wonderland. As Lewis Carroll tells us, Alice was following a path through a forest in Wonderland when it divided into two directions. Standing irresolute, she inquired of the Cheshire Cat, which had suddenly appeared in a nearby tree, which path she should take. "Where do you want to go?" asked the cat.

"I don't know," said Alice.

"Then," said the cat, "it really doesn't matter, does it?"

We who hold the priesthood know where it is we wish to go. Our objective is the celestial kingdom of our Heavenly Father. Ours is the sacred duty to follow the well-defined path that leads to it.

Prepare for missions

Soon you will be ready to serve a mission. It's wonderful that you are willing and prepared to serve wherever the Spirit of the Lord directs. This alone is a modern miracle, considering the times in which we live.

Missionary work is hard work. Missionary service is demanding and requires long hours of study and preparation, that the missionary himself might match the divine message he proclaims. It is a labor of love but also of sacrifice and devotion to duty.

An anxious mother of a prospective missionary once asked me what I would recommend her son learn before the arrival of his missionary call. I am certain she anticipated a profound response which would contain the more familiar requirements for service of which we are all aware. However, I said, "Teach your son how to cook, but more particularly, teach him how to get along with others. He will be happier and more productive if he learns these two vital skills."

Young men, you are preparing for your missions when you learn your duties as deacons, teachers, and priests and then perform those duties with determination and love, knowing you are on the Lord's errand.

Sometimes the lessons will come quietly. A few weeks ago I was visiting a sacrament meeting at a care facility in Salt Lake City. The priests at the sacrament table were sitting quietly prior to performing their duties when the opening hymn was announced. A patient near the front of the large room had difficulty opening his hymnbook. Without so much as a question, one of the young men slipped to the patient's side and, gently turning the pages to the correct hymn, placed the disabled man's finger at the beginning of the first verse of the hymn. They exchanged an understanding smile, and the priest returned to his seat. This modest gesture of love and helpfulness impressed me. I congratulated him and said, "You are going to be an effective missionary."

Some missionaries are gifted with the power of expression, while others have a superior knowledge of the gospel. Some, however, are late bloomers who day by day become more proficient and

successful. Avoid the temptation of ladder climbing in the mission leadership ranks. It matters little whether you are a district or zone leader or assistant to the president. The important thing is that each one does his very best in the work to which he has been called. Why, I had some missionaries who were so adept at training new missionaries that I couldn't spare them for other leadership assignments.

Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies

Entering the mission field can sometimes be an overpowering and frightening experience. President Harold B. Lee was talking to me one day concerning those who feel inadequate and are worried when they receive an assignment in the Church. He counseled, "Remember, whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies."

When I served as president of the Canadian Mission, headquartered in Toronto, one missionary came to our mission without some of the talents of others, yet he devotedly plunged into his missionary labors. The work was difficult for him; however, he valiantly struggled to be his best self.

At a zone conference with a General Authority attending, the missionaries had not done too well in a scripture quiz conducted by the visitor. The visitor, with a little sarcasm, commented, "Why, I don't believe this group knows even the names of the basic missionary pamphlets and their authors."

Well, that was the proverbial "straw" that broke the camel's back. I spoke up, "I think they *do* know them."

"Well, we will see," he said, and then he had the missionaries stand. In making a selection of a missionary to prove the point, none of the bright-appearing, experienced, polished missionaries was selected, but rather my new missionary, who had a hard time gaining knowledge of such things, was singled out. My heart

literally sank. I looked at the pleading expression on the elder's face; I knew that he was paralyzed with fear. How I prayed—oh, how I prayed: "Heavenly Father, come to his rescue." And He did. After a long pause, the visitor said, "Who authored the pamphlet *The Plan of Salvation*?"

After what seemed like an eternity, the trembling missionary responded, "John Morgan."

"Who wrote *Which Church Is Right*?"

Again the pause, and then the reply, "Mark E. Petersen."

"How about *The Lord's Tenth*?"

"James E. Talmage wrote that one," came the response.

And so it went through the list of missionary pamphlets we used. Finally came the question, "Is there another pamphlet?"

"Yes. It's called *After Baptism, What?*"

"Who wrote it?"

Without hesitation the missionary answered, "The name of the author isn't shown in the pamphlet, but my mission president told me it was written by Elder Mark E. Petersen by assignment from President David O. McKay."

The General Authority then showed his greatness. Turning to me he said, "President Monson, I owe you and your missionaries an apology. They *do* know the basic pamphlets and their authors." He stood tall in my sight that day, and we became close personal friends.

But what about the missionary? He completed an honorable mission and returned to his home in the West. Later he was called to serve as the bishop of his ward. Every year I receive a Christmas card from him and his wife and family. He always signs his name and then adds this comment, "From your best missionary."

The Lord looketh on the heart

Each year when that Christmas card arrives, I think of that experience, and

the lesson from 1 Samuel in the Holy Bible penetrates my soul. You will recall that the prophet Samuel was directed by the Lord to go to Bethlehem, even to Jesse, with the revelation that a king would be found among the sons of Jesse. Samuel did as the Lord had commanded him. Each of Jesse's sons was introduced to Samuel—even seven of them. Though they were fair and qualified in appearance, Samuel was told by the Lord that none was to be chosen. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him. . . . And he sent, and brought him in. . . . And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he."⁴

The lesson for us to learn is found in the sixteenth chapter of 1 Samuel, verse seven: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."⁵

Who honors God, God honors

As bearers of the priesthood, all of us united as one can qualify for the guiding influence of our Heavenly Father as we pursue our respective callings. We are engaged in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We, like those of olden times, have answered His call. We are on His errand. We shall succeed in the solemn charge given by Mormon to declare the Lord's word among His people. He wrote: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus

Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."⁶

May we ever remember the truth, "Who honors God, God honors." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Ye Who Are Called to Labor," *Hymns*, no. 321.
2. See Luke 2:52.
3. "Choose the Right," *Hymns*, no. 239.
4. 1 Samuel 16:11–12.
5. 1 Samuel 16:7.
6. 3 Nephi 5:13.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

Brethren, we remind you that the CBS Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow the broadcast. As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus.

Following my remarks the choir will conclude by singing "To Nephi, Seer of Olden Time," following which the benediction will be offered by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Now, if I may have an interest in your faith and prayers, I hope to be able to say something that is helpful. Last Saturday evening, one week ago, a great Relief Society conference was held in

this Tabernacle. It was an inspiring experience to look into the faces of that vast congregation of women of strength and faith and capacity. Now it is likewise an inspiring experience to look into the

faces of you brethren and feel of your strength, your faith, your loyalty, your devotion.

This has been an hour of inspiration. We have heard much of wonderful counsel that will bless our lives if we will accept it. I desire to speak of two or three matters.

The first has already been dealt with by President Monson and Brother Hildam. I wish to add my endorsement, together with a few further observations.

Miraculous missionary work

I speak also of missionary service. I was recently in London, England, and there we held a meeting with the missionaries serving in that area. Representatives of the British Broadcasting Corporation filmed part of the service. They are preparing a documentary of our missionary work in the British Isles.

Prior to this I had been interviewed by a representative of the BBC Radio Worldwide Service. He had seen the missionaries and noted their youthful appearance. He asked me, "How do you expect people to listen to these callow youth?"

In case some of you do not know the meaning of *callow*, it means immature, inexperienced, lacking sophistication.

I replied to the reporter with a smile, "Callow youth? It is with these missionaries today as it was with Timothy in the days of Paul. It was Paul who wrote to his young companion, saying, 'Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity' (1 Timothy 4:12).

"The remarkable thing is that people do receive them and listen to them. They are wholesome. They are bright, they are alert, they are upstanding. They are clean looking, and people quickly develop confidence in them."

I might have added, "They are a miracle." They knock on doors, but not

many are at home these days in a city like London. And so missionaries approach them on the street and engage them in conversation.

It is not an easy thing for a sensitive young man or woman to do this. But they come to believe in these further words of Paul to Timothy:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:7-8).

They recognize that fear comes not from God but from the adversary of truth. And so they develop a capacity to engage people in conversation concerning their work and their message. They and their associates will bring into the Church during this year of 1995 almost 300,000 converts. That is the equivalent of a hundred new stakes of Zion and more than five hundred new wards in one year.

"Callow youth?" Yes, they are lacking in sophistication. What a great blessing this is. They carry no element of deception. They speak with no element of sophistry. They speak out of their hearts with personal conviction. Each is a servant of the living God, an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their power comes not of their learning in the things of the world. Their power comes of faith and prayer and humility. As we have been reminded, the work is not easy. It has never been easy. Long ago Jeremiah said that the Lord would gather His people one of a city and two of a family and bring them to Zion and feed them with pastors after His own heart (see Jeremiah 3:14-15). In terms of the individual missionary, the harvest is not great in most instances, but in the aggregate it becomes tremendous. The work demands courage, it demands effort, it demands dedication, it demands the humility to get on one's knees and ask the Lord for help and direction.

Prepare to serve a mission

I throw out a challenge to every young man within this vast congregation tonight. Prepare yourself now to be worthy to serve the Lord as a full-time missionary. He has said, "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear" (D&C 38:30). Prepare to consecrate two years of your lives to this sacred service. That will in effect constitute a tithe on the first twenty years of your lives. Think of all that you have that is good—life itself, health, strength, food to eat and clothing to wear, parents, brothers and sisters, and friends. All are gifts from the Lord.

Blessings of missionary service

Of course your time is precious, and you may feel you cannot afford two years. But I promise you that the time you spend in the mission field, if those years are spent in dedicated service, will yield a greater return on investment than any other two years of your lives. You will come to know what dedication and consecration mean. You will develop powers of persuasion which will bless your entire life. Your timidity, your fears, your shyness will gradually disappear as you go forth with boldness and conviction. You will learn to work with others, to develop a spirit of teamwork. The cankering evil of selfishness will be supplanted by a sense of service to others. You will draw nearer to the Lord than you likely will in any other set of circumstances. You will come to know that without His help you are indeed weak and simple—but that with His help you can accomplish miracles.

You will establish habits of industry. You will develop a talent for the establishment of goals of effort. You will learn to work with singleness of purpose. What a tremendous foundation all of this will become for you in your later educational efforts and your life's work. Two years will not be time lost. It will be skills gained.

You will bless the lives of those you teach and their posterity after them. You will bless your own life. You will bless the lives of your family, who will sustain you and pray for you.

And above and beyond all of this will come that sweet peace in your heart that you have served your Lord faithfully and well. Your service will become an expression of gratitude to your Heavenly Father.

You will come to know your Redeemer as your greatest friend in time or eternity. You will realize that through His atoning sacrifice He has opened the way for eternal life and an exaltation above and beyond your greatest dreams.

If you serve a mission faithfully and well, you will be a better husband, you will be a better father, you will be a better student, a better worker in your chosen vocation. Love is of the essence of this missionary work. Selflessness is of its very nature. Self-discipline is its requirement. Prayer opens its reservoir of power.

And so, my dear young brethren, resolve within your hearts today to include in the program of your lives service in the harvest field of the Lord as a missionary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Importance of temple work

And now, brethren, I pass to another subject. Missionary work is concerned with providing saving ordinances to our Father's living children throughout the world. Temple work is primarily concerned with service in behalf of the sons and daughters of God who have passed beyond the veil of death. God is no respecter of persons. If the living in all nations are deserving of the saving ordinances of the gospel, then those of all past generations must likewise be deserving.

Our people cannot partake of all of the blessings of the gospel unless they

can receive their own temple ordinances and then make these ordinances available to those of their kindred dead and others. If this is to happen, temples must be available to them. I feel very strongly about this.

Back in 1954, before I was a General Authority, President McKay called me into his office and told me of the planned construction of the Swiss Temple. He gave me an assignment to find a way by which the temple ordinances could be administered to those of various languages without multiplying the number of temple workers. Since that time I have had much to do with these sacred buildings and the ordinances administered therein.

Report on temple building

We now have forty-seven working temples. Eight of these are in Utah, sixteen in other areas of the United States, two in Canada, and twenty-one outside of North America. Twenty-eight of the forty-seven have been dedicated since I came into the First Presidency in 1981. In addition, four have been rededicated after very extensive remodeling. We now have under construction six more, located in American Fork and Vernal, Utah; St. Louis, Missouri; Hong Kong; Preston, England; and Bogotá, Colombia.

We have announced seven additional temples: for Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic; Madrid, Spain; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Recife, Brazil; Cochabamba, Bolivia; Nashville, Tennessee; and Hartford, Connecticut. And we are working on the possibility of another—in Venezuela.

After working for years to acquire a suitable site in the Hartford area, during which time the Church has grown appreciably in areas to the north and south, we have determined that we will not at this time build a temple in the immediate area of Hartford, but rather we will build

one in the area of Boston, Massachusetts, and another in White Plains, New York. In other words, there will be two to serve the needs of the people where originally it was planned one would do. We have beautiful sites in both of these new locations.

We apologize to our faithful Saints in the Hartford area. We know you will be disappointed in this announcement. You know that we and your local officers have spent countless hours searching for a suitable location that would handle the needs of the Saints of New York and New England. While we deeply regret disappointing the people in the Hartford area, we are satisfied that we have been led to the present decision and that temples will be located in such areas that those of you who reside in the Hartford area will not have too far to drive.

Additionally, we are working on six other sites. It is a tremendously ambitious program.

I have a burning desire that a temple be located within reasonable access to Latter-day Saints throughout the world. We can proceed only so fast. We try to see that each temple will be in an excellent location where there will be good neighbors over a long period of time. Real estate prices in such areas are usually high. A temple is a much more complex structure to build than an ordinary meetinghouse or stake center. It is built to a higher standard of architecture. It takes longer and costs more. The work is moving about as fast as we can go. It is my constant prayer that somehow it might be speeded up so that more of our people might have easier access to a sacred house of the Lord.

Brigham Young once said that if young people really understood the blessings of temple marriage, they would walk all the way to England if that were necessary (see *Journal of Discourses*, 11:118). We hope they will not have to go anywhere near that far.

Our need for temple attendance

These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology. I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein. I am satisfied that every man or woman who goes to the temple in a spirit of sincerity and faith leaves the house of the Lord a better man or woman. There is need for constant improvement in all of our lives. There is need occasionally to leave the noise and the tumult of the world and step within the walls of a sacred house of God, there to feel His spirit in an environment of holiness and peace.

If every man in this church who has been ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood were to qualify himself to hold a temple recommend and then were to go to the house of the Lord and renew his covenants in solemnity before God and witnesses, we would be a better people. There would be little or no infidelity among us. Divorce would almost entirely disappear. So much of heartache and heartbreak would be avoided. There would be a greater measure of peace and love and happiness in our homes. There would be fewer weeping wives and weeping children. There would be a greater measure of appreciation and of mutual respect among us. And I am confident the Lord would smile with greater favor upon us.

Growth in Church membership

Now, brethren, I have one more matter before I conclude, and if I run

overtime a little, I hope you will excuse me.

I desire to present to the priesthood of the Church my appraisal of the present condition of this great organization of which each of us is a part and in which each of us has an interest. I think you are entitled to occasionally hear such a report.

I am grateful to be able to say that the Church is in good condition. It is healthy. It is growing in numbers. As of the end of 1994 our membership stood at 9,025,000, a gain of 300,730 over the previous year. This means that we are adding a million new members each three and one-half years, and I am confident that momentum will increase. It is expanding geographically over the world. I believe that it is well managed. But we are not without problems. Too many of our people drift into inactivity. Too many fail to live the principles of the gospel. But with all of this, we have cause to rejoice as to what is occurring.

Management of sacred Church funds

The Church has no debt. I qualify that to the extent that we have some contracts for the purchase of properties where the sellers insist on payments over a period of time. There are resources to ensure that these contracts will be covered in a timely way.

In our few business enterprises, some debt is used as a tool of management. But the ratio of debt to assets would be envied by the executives of any large organization.

The Church has been living within its means, and it will continue to do so. I am profoundly grateful for the law of tithing. To me it is a constantly recurring miracle. It is made possible by the faith of the people. It is the Lord's plan for financing the work of His kingdom.

It is so simple and straightforward. It consists of thirty-five words set forth

in section 119 of the Doctrine and Covenants. What a contrast with the cumbersome, complex, and difficult tax codes with which we live as citizens.

There is no compulsion to pay tithing other than the commandment of the Lord, and that, of course, becomes the best of all reasons. This is the only large society of which I am aware that does not drop from its rolls those who fail to pay what might be considered their dues.

The payment of tithing carries with it the conviction of the truth of the principle.

Now, we know that these funds are sacred. We have a compelling trust to use them carefully and wisely. I have said before that I keep on the credenza in my office this genuine widow's mite (too small for you to see, but it's there nevertheless), given me long ago by Brother David B. Galbraith, who at the time was the president of the Jerusalem Branch of the Church. I keep it as a reminder of the sacrifice it represents, that we are dealing with the consecration of the widow as well as the offering of the wealthy. I thank all who live honestly with the Lord in the payment of their tithes and offerings. But I know that you do not need to be thanked. Your testimony of the divinity of this law, and of the blessings that flow from its observance, is as strong as is my testimony.

Not only are we determined to live within the means of the Church, but each year we put into the reserves of the Church a portion of our annual budget. We are only doing what we have suggested every family do. Should there come a time of economic distress, we would hope to have the means to weather the storm.

Great contributions of voluntary service

We recognize the importance of consecrated voluntary service in carrying forward the programs of the Church. We have a veritable army of dedicated people

who give freely of their time to assist in the work. Our Human Resources people indicate that there are 96,484 of these volunteers now serving. They represent the equivalent of 10,000 full-time employees, and their service has an annual value of \$360 million. They labor in a missionary or volunteer capacity in our Church Educational System, in our family history organization, in the temples, and in various other departments and offices of the Church. We are deeply grateful and heavily indebted to them for their magnificent contribution. I am confident that the Lord is pleased with their dedicated service.

Growth of seminary and institute

Our program of weekday religious education moves forward. Wherever the Church is organized, the seminary program is put in place. Likewise our institutes are providing a wonderful service for those of college and university age. During this 1995-1996 academic year, there are more than 583,000 students enrolled in seminaries and institutes. Many of you young men who are here this evening—I venture almost every one of you—is a beneficiary of this wonderful Church program. I'd like all of you to stand, just for a moment, who are seminary or institute enrollees. Look at that! That says it! Thank you very much.

We hope that all for whom these programs are available will take advantage of them. Knowledge of the gospel will be increased, faith will be strengthened, and you will enjoy wonderful associations and friendships with those of your own kind.

Distribution of the Book of Mormon

I think of the Prophet Joseph's struggle in getting out the first edition of the Book of Mormon. There were 5,000 copies in that first edition, and its printing was made possible only through the

generosity of Martin Harris. You may be interested to know that last year 3,742,629 copies of the Book of Mormon were distributed. All or substantial parts of the book are printed in eighty-five languages. We may not be flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon, as President Benson had urged us to do, but let me say that it is no small thing to distribute three and three-quarter million copies in a single year.

Growth in stakes, wards, and buildings

It was my privilege to preside over the 150th stake of the Church, which was created in 1945, 115 years after the Church was organized. Now, an even fifty years later, there are 2,101 stakes of Zion. Seven hundred and seventy-two new wards and branches were organized during 1994, bringing the total at the close of the year to 21,774 wards and branches. It should be apparent to all why we must construct so many new buildings in which to house our people for worship and instruction. We have 375 new buildings in the course of construction at the present time. They are becoming increasingly costly to build. We hope that you will take good care of them. To you young men I make a special plea that you do all possible in this regard. We want these facilities *used* for the purposes for which they are constructed, but we do not want them *abused*. Utility costs are high. Turn off the lights when the buildings are not in use. Leave no litter about them. Keep the grounds clean and attractive. Wherever one of our buildings is found, it ought to say to those who pass, "The people who worship here are people who believe in cleanliness, order, beauty, and respectability."

Our responsibility to advance the work

I have already spoken to you about the increase in the number of temples. It is so with every aspect of the program. I see a bright future ahead. I do not discount the fact that we will be faced with problems. This work has always been faced with problems. The work of the adversary continues against it. But we will move forward as those who have gone before us have moved forward. Every man and boy within the sound of my voice tonight has the responsibility to assist in this great work of reaching out and growing stronger.

Brethren, thank you for your faith. Thank you for your devotion. We are aware of the great trust which you place in us. We are aware of the sacred trust placed in us by the Lord. And He has likewise placed a sacred trust in each of you who holds His divine priesthood. As I have said before, we are all in this together. Each of us has his part in the building of this kingdom. How wonderful, how very satisfying it is to know that each of us can do something to strengthen this, the work of the Almighty.

It is true. It is our Father's work. It is the church of our Redeemer. The priesthood which we hold is a very real and a very precious thing. I leave you my testimony, my love and my blessing, and my gratitude, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "To Nephi, Seer of Olden Time."

Elder Ben B. Banks offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 1, 1995. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Donald Ripplinger conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, to the fourth general session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Henry B. Eyring, Graham W. Doxey, and Sam K. Shima-bukuro are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders F. Enzo Busche and Lowell D. Wood are in attendance.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities, who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Clay Christiansen at the organ, opened these services by singing "Lo, the Mighty God Appearing!" We express appreciation to Brother Ripplinger, who for twenty years has served as associate director and who will retire in January 1996.

The choir will now sing "Lean on My Ample Arm," following which Elder Hugh W. Pinnock of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "Lean on My Ample Arm."

Elder Hugh W. Pinnock offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

The heavenly virtue of patience

Recently I met an old friend I had not seen for some time. He greeted me with the salutation, "How is the world treating you?" I don't recall the specifics of my reply, but his provocative question caused me to reflect on my many blessings and my gratitude for life itself and the privilege and opportunity to serve.

At times the response to this same question brings an unanticipated answer. Some years ago I attended a stake conference in Texas. I was met at the airport by the stake president, and while we were driving to the stake center I said, "President, how is everything going for you?"

He responded, "I wish you had asked me that question a week earlier, for this week has been rather eventful. On Friday

I was terminated from my employment, this morning my wife came down with bronchitis, and this afternoon the family dog was struck and killed by a passing car. Other than these things, I guess everything is all right."

Life is full of difficulties, some minor and others of a more serious nature. There seems to be an unending supply of challenges for one and all. Our problem is that we often expect instantaneous solutions to such challenges, forgetting that frequently the heavenly virtue of patience is required.

The counsel heard in our youth is still applicable today and should be heeded. "Hold your horses," "Keep your shirt on," "Slow down," "Don't be in such a hurry," "Follow the rules," "Be careful" are more than trite expressions. They describe sincere counsel and speak the wisdom of experience.

The mindless and reckless speeding of a youth-filled car down a winding and hazardous canyon road can bring a sudden loss of control, the careening of the car with its precious cargo over the precipice, and the downward plunge that oftentimes brings permanent incapacity, perhaps premature death, and grieving hearts of loved ones. The glee-filled moment can turn in an instant to a lifetime of regret.

O precious youth, please give life a chance. Apply the virtue of patience.

Patience in adversity

In sickness, with its attendant pain, patience is required. If the only perfect man who ever lived—even Jesus of Nazareth—was called upon to endure great suffering, how can we, who are less than perfect, expect to be free of all such challenges?

Who can count the vast throngs of the lonely, the aged, the helpless—those who feel abandoned by the caravan of life as it moves relentlessly onward and then disappears beyond the sight of

those who ponder, who wonder, and who sometimes question as they are left alone with their thoughts. Patience can be a helpful companion during such stressful times.

Occasionally I visit nursing homes, where long-suffering is found. While attending Sunday services at one facility, I noticed a young girl who was to play her violin for the comfort of those assembled. She told me she was nervous and hoped she could do her best. As she played, one called out, "Oh, you are so pretty, and you play so beautifully." The strains of the moving bow across the taut strings and the elegant movement of the young girl's fingers seemed inspired by the impromptu comment. She played magnificently.

Afterward I congratulated her and her gifted accompanist. They responded, "We came to cheer the frail, the sick, and the elderly. Our fears vanished as we played. We forgot our own cares and concerns. We may have cheered them, but they truly did inspire us."

Wendy Bennion's patience

Sometimes the tables are reversed. A dear and cherished young friend, Wendy Bennion of Salt Lake City, was such an example. Just the day before yesterday, she quietly departed mortality and returned "to that God who gave [her] life" (Alma 40:11). She had struggled for over five long years in her battle with cancer. Ever cheerful, always reaching out to help others, never losing faith, she had a contagious smile that attracted others to her as a magnet attracts metal shavings. While Wendy was ill and in pain, a friend of hers, feeling downcast with her own situation, visited her. Nancy, Wendy's mother, knowing Wendy was in extreme pain, felt that perhaps the friend had stayed too long. She asked Wendy, after the friend had left, why she had allowed her to stay so long when she herself was in so much pain. Wendy's re-

sponse: "What I was doing for my friend was a lot more important than the pain I was having. If I can help her, then the pain is worth it."

The Savior's patience

Wendy's attitude was reminiscent of Him who bore the sorrows of the world, who patiently suffered excruciating pain and disappointment, but who, with silent step of His sandaled feet, passed by a man who was blind from birth, restoring his sight. He approached the grieving widow of Nain and raised her son from the dead. He trudged up Calvary's steep slope, carrying His own cruel cross, undistracted by the constant jeers and taunting that accompanied His every step. For He had an appointment with divine destiny. In a very real way He visits us, each one, with His teachings. He brings cheer and inspires goodness. He gave His precious life that the grave would be deprived of its victory, that death would lose its sting, that life eternal would be our gift.

Taken from the cross, buried in a borrowed tomb, this man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, arose on the morning of the third day. His resurrection was discovered by Mary and the other Mary when they approached the tomb. The great stone blocking the entrance had been rolled away. Came the query of two angels who stood by in shining garments: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."¹

Paul declared to the Hebrews:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."²

Job's patience

Perhaps there has never occurred such a demonstration of patience as that exemplified by Job, who was described

in the Holy Bible as being perfect and upright and one who feared God and eschewed evil.³ He was blessed with great wealth and riches in abundance. Satan obtained leave from the Lord to try to tempt Job. How great was Job's misery, how terrible his loss, how tortured his life. Urged by his wife to curse God and die, his reply bespoke his faith: "I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."⁴ What faith, what courage, what trust. Job lost possessions—all of them. Job lost his health—all of it. Job honored the trust given him. Job personified patience.

Joseph Smith's patience

Another who portrayed the virtue of patience was the Prophet Joseph Smith. After his supernal experience in the grove called Sacred, where the Father and the Son appeared to him, he was called upon to wait. At length, after Joseph suffered through over three years of derision for his beliefs, the angel Moroni appeared to him. And then more waiting and patience were required. Let us remember the counsel found in Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."⁵

Stop, look, and listen

Today in our hurried and hectic lives, we could well go back to an earlier time for the lesson taught us regarding crossing dangerous streets. "Stop, look, and listen" were the watchwords. Could we not apply them now? Stop from a reckless road to ruin. Look upward for heavenly help. Listen for His invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁶

He will teach us the truth of the beautiful verse:

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.⁷

We will learn that each of us is precious to our Elder Brother, even the Lord Jesus Christ. He truly loves us.

His life is the flawless example of one afflicted with sorrows and disappointments, who nonetheless provided the example of forgetting self and serving others. The remembered verse of childhood echoes afresh:

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so!⁸

And so does the Book of Mormon, and so does the Doctrine and Covenants, and so does the Pearl of Great Price. Let the scriptures be your guide, and you will never find yourself traveling the road to nowhere.

Angels in disguise

Today some are out of work, out of money, out of self-confidence. Hunger haunts their lives, and discouragement dogs their paths. But help is here—even food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, and shelter for the homeless.

Thousands of tons move outward from our Church storehouses weekly—even food, clothing, medical equipment and supplies to the far corners of the earth and to empty cupboards and needy people closer to home.

I witness the motivation that prompts busy and talented dentists and doctors on a regular basis to leave their practices and donate their skills to those who need such help. They travel to faraway places to repair cleft palates, correct malformed bones, and restore crippled bodies—all

for the love of God's children. The afflicted who have patiently waited for corrective help are blessed by these "angels in disguise."

Promises made in eastern Germany

In the words of a well-known song, I wish you could "come fly with me" to eastern Germany, where I visited last month. As we traveled along the autobahns, I reflected on a time twenty-seven years before when I saw on the same autobahns just trucks carrying armed soldiers and policemen. Barking dogs everywhere strained on their leashes, and informers walked the streets. Back then, the flame of freedom had flickered and burned low. A wall of shame sprang up, and a curtain of iron came down. Hope was all but snuffed out. Life, precious life, continued on in faith, nothing wavering. Patient waiting was required. An abiding trust in God marked the life of each Latter-day Saint.

When I made my initial visit beyond the wall, it was a time of fear on the part of our members as they struggled in the performance of their duties. I found the dullness of despair on the faces of many passersby but a bright and beautiful expression of love emanating from our members. In Görlitz the building in which we met was shell-pocked from the war, but the interior reflected the tender care of our leaders in bringing brightness and cleanliness to an otherwise shabby and grimy structure. The Church had survived both the war and the Cold War which followed. The singing of the Saints brightened every soul. They sang the old Sunday School favorite:

If the way be full of trial; Weary not!
If it's one of sore denial, Weary not!
If it now be one of weeping,
There will come a joyous greeting,
When the harvest we are reaping—
Weary not!
Do not weary by the way,

Whatever be thy lot;
There awaits a brighter day
To all, to all who weary not!⁹

I was touched by their sincerity. I was humbled by their poverty. They had so little. My heart filled with sorrow because they had no patriarch. They had no wards or stakes—just branches. They could not receive temple blessings—neither endowment nor sealing. No official visitor had come from Church headquarters in a long time. The members were forbidden to leave the country. Yet they trusted in the Lord with all their hearts, and they leaned not to their own understanding. In all their ways they acknowledged Him, and He directed their paths.¹⁰ I stood at the pulpit, and with tear-filled eyes and a voice choked with emotion I made a promise to the people: “If you will remain true and faithful to the commandments of God, every blessing any member of the Church enjoys in any other country will be yours.”

That night as I realized what I had promised, I dropped to my knees and prayed, “Heavenly Father, I’m on Thy errand; this is Thy church. I have spoken words that came not from me, but from Thee and Thy Son. Wilt Thou, therefore, fulfill the promise in the lives of this noble people?” There coursed through my mind the words from the psalm: “Be still, and know that I am God.”¹¹ The heavenly virtue of patience was required.

Patience brings fulfillment of promises

Little by little the promise was fulfilled. First, patriarchs were ordained, then lesson manuals produced. Wards were formed and stakes created. Chapels and stake centers were begun, completed, and dedicated. Then, miracle of miracles, a holy temple of God was permitted, designed, constructed, and dedicated. Finally, after an absence of fifty years, approval was granted for full-time missionaries to enter the nation and for

local youth to serve elsewhere in the world. Then, like the wall of Jericho, the Berlin Wall crumbled, and freedom, with its attendant responsibilities, returned.

All of the parts of the precious promise of twenty-seven years earlier were fulfilled, save one. Tiny Görlitz, where the promise had been given, still had no chapel of its own. Now even that dream became a reality. The building was approved and completed. Dedication day dawned. Just a month ago Sister Monson and I, along with Elder and Sister Dieter Uchtdorf, held a meeting of dedication in Görlitz. The same songs were sung as were rendered twenty-seven years earlier. The members knew the significance of the occasion, marking the total fulfillment of the promise. They wept as they sang. The song of the righteous was indeed a prayer unto the Lord and had been answered with a blessing upon their heads.¹²

At the conclusion of the meeting we were reluctant to leave. As we did so, seen were the waving hands of all, heard were the words, “*Auf Wiedersehen, auf Wiedersehen*”; God be with you till we meet again.”

Patience, that heavenly virtue, had brought to humble Saints its heaven-sent reward. The words of Rudyard Kipling’s “Recessional” seemed so fitting:

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.¹³

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 24:5–6.
2. Hebrews 12:1.
3. See Job 1:1.
4. Job 19:25–26.
5. Isaiah 55:8–9.
6. Matthew 11:28.

7. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life," lines 5-8.
8. "Jesus Loves Me!" Anna B. Warner, in *Alexander's Gospel Songs*, comp. Charles M. Alexander (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908), p. 139.
9. "If the Way Be Full of Trial, Weary Not," *Deseret Sunday School Songs* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1909), no. 158.
10. See Proverbs 3:5-6.
11. Psalm 46:10.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 25:12.
13. "God of Our Fathers, Known of Old," *Hymns*, no. 80.

The choir sang "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?"

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the choir singing "What Was Witnessed in the Heavens?"

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now address us.

President James E. Faust

Priesthood blessings

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I wish to affirm my love and appreciation to you for your faithfulness and devotion. I earnestly entreat your faith and prayers as I address a most important and holy subject: the divine, magnifying, and strengthening power that can come to us through priesthood blessings.

A priesthood blessing is sacred. It can be a holy and inspired statement of our wants and needs. If we are in tune spiritually, we can receive a confirming witness of the truth of the promised blessings. Priesthood blessings can help us in the small and great decisions of our lives. If, through our priesthood blessings, we could perceive only a small part of the person God intends us to be, we would lose our fear and never doubt again.

Blessings strengthen and magnify us

As a small boy I remember being intrigued by my grandmother's magnifying glass, which she used in her old age to read and do needlework. When the glass was in focus, everything I looked at was greatly magnified. But I was most in-

trigued by what happened when the lens concentrated the sunlight on an object. When it passed through the magnifying glass, the sunlight's power was absolutely amazing.

This great magnifying effect can be compared to a profound blessing that came to Jacob, who wrestled most of the night for a blessing:

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled [with a messenger¹ from God] until the breaking of the day. . . .

"And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

"And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."²

Jacob received his blessing in this marvelous experience, and as heirs of Abraham through the blood of Israel we also receive our blessings of divine favor. As the Lord said in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"For ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, . . .

"Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs re-

main through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began."³

Unlike Jacob, we do not need to wrestle physically much of the night for blessings to strengthen and magnify us. In the Church, blessings are available to all who are worthy through those authorized and even appointed to give priesthood blessings. Stake presidents, bishops, quorum presidents, and home teachers are authorized to give blessings. Worthy fathers and grandfathers, as well as other Melchizedek Priesthood holders, may give blessings to members in times of sickness and when important events occur. Such individual blessings are part of the continuous revelation that we claim as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Priesthood influence in the family

Elder John A. Widtsoe stated, "Every father, having children born to him under the covenant, is to them as a patriarch, and he has the right to bless his posterity in the authority of the Priesthood which he holds."⁴

We know that the gospel always has and always will operate through families. Since early biblical times, order has been brought into the house of Israel through family units. The family unit had inherently and internally the natural love and concern and the blood ties to bring a governing peace and stability to the peoples of God. The same is true today for essentially the same reasons. No other unit of society is an effective substitute for the ties of love and affection inherent in families. The natural leaders of the family unit are the parents, standing side by side as equals in their loving guidance of their children. Each parent brings a separate enriching influence. The power of the priesthood should be the dominant influence in family affairs. Priesthood blessings do not just involve men. They

bless equally and fully the women and children of the family. Whatever diminishes family order is destructive to the family unit and to society.

Ordained patriarchs

We are most fortunate that some men are specifically ordained and authorized by their priesthood office and calling to give blessings and declare our lineage in the house of Israel. The inspired declaration of lineage is an integral part of the blessing. I pay honor and tribute to the noble, faithful men who are our ordained patriarchs. They have not sought this heavy and lonely responsibility. They are often among the most humble and devoted of our brethren. These chosen men live worthy of the inspiration of heaven. Patriarchs are privileged to bestow blessings, for they are entitled to speak authoritatively under the inspiration of the Lord.

The office of patriarch is an office of the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is one of blessing, not of administration. It is a sacred and spiritual revelatory calling which usually continues for much of the patriarch's life. Our patriarchs devote themselves fully to their callings and do all they can to live in faith and worthiness so that each blessing is inspired. The patriarch's calling becomes a beautiful, sacred, spiritual, and fulfilling experience. As moved upon by the Holy Spirit, the patriarch declares by inspiration the lineage in the house of Israel of the recipient, together with such blessings, spiritual gifts, promises, advice, admonition, and warnings the patriarch feels inspired to give. The patriarchal blessing is, in essence, a prophetic blessing and utterance.

Patriarchal blessings—a star to follow

A patriarchal blessing from an ordained patriarch can give us a star to follow, which is a personal revelation from

God to each individual. If we follow this star, we are less likely to stumble and be misled. Our patriarchal blessing will be an anchor to our souls, and if we are worthy, neither death nor the devil can deprive us of the blessings pronounced. They are blessings we can enjoy now and forever.

As with many other blessings, patriarchal blessings should ordinarily be requested by the one desiring the blessing. Responsibility for receiving a patriarchal blessing rests primarily on the individual when he or she has sufficient understanding of the significance of a patriarchal blessing. I encourage all members of the Church having this maturity to become worthy and obtain their blessings. By their very nature, all blessings are conditional on worthiness, regardless of whether the blessing specifically spells out the qualifications. The patriarchal blessing is primarily a guide to the future, not an index to the past. Therefore, it is important that the recipient be young enough that many of the significant events of life are in the future. I recently heard of a person over ninety years of age who received his patriarchal blessing. It would be interesting to read that blessing.

Patriarchal blessings come from God

The patriarch has no blessing of his own to give. We heard Elder LeGrand Richards tell of a patriarch who once said to a woman, "I have a wonderful blessing for you." But when the patriarch laid his hands on the head of the recipient, his mind went completely blank. He apologized. "I was mistaken. I do not have a blessing for you. It is the Lord who has the blessing for you." The woman came back the next day, and after the patriarch had prayerfully implored the Lord, a blessing came that mentioned many concerns known only to this good sister. All blessings come from God. Our Heavenly Father knows

His children. He knows their strengths and weaknesses. He knows their capabilities and potential. Our patriarchal blessings indicate what He expects of us and what our potential can be.

Study and ponder patriarchal blessings

Patriarchal blessings should be read humbly, prayerfully, and frequently. A patriarchal blessing is very sacred and personal, but it may be shared with close family members. It is a sacred guideline of counsel, promises, and information from the Lord; however, a person should not expect the blessing to detail all that will happen to him or her or to answer all questions. The fact that one's patriarchal blessing may not mention an important event in life, such as a mission or marriage, does not mean that it will not happen. In order to receive the fulfillment of our patriarchal blessings, we should treasure in our hearts the precious words they contain, ponder them, and so live that we will obtain the blessings in mortality and a crown of righteousness in the hereafter.

My own blessing is short, and it is limited to perhaps three-quarters of a page on one side, yet it has been completely adequate and perfect for me. I received my patriarchal blessing as I entered my early teenage years. The patriarch promised that my blessing would "be a comfort and a guide" to me throughout my life. As a boy I read it over and over again. I pondered each word. I prayed earnestly to understand fully the spiritual meaning. Having that blessing early in my life guided me through all of the significant events and challenges of my life. I did not fully understand the meaning of my blessing until I gained more maturity and experience. This blessing outlined some of the responsibilities I would have in the kingdom of God on earth.

President Heber J. Grant told of the patriarchal blessing he received: "That patriarch put his hands upon my head

and bestowed upon me a little blessing that would perhaps be about one-third of a typewritten page. That blessing foretold my life to the present moment.”⁵

Fulfillment of promises

Elder John A. Widtsoe said: “It should always be kept in mind that the realization of the promises made may come in this or the future life. Men have stumbled at times because promised blessings have not occurred in this life. They have failed to remember that, in the gospel, life with all its activities continues forever and that the labors of earth may be continued in heaven. Besides, the Giver of the blessings, the Lord, reserves the right to have them become active in our lives, as suits His divine purpose. We and our blessings are in the hands of the Lord. But, there is the general testimony that when the gospel law has been obeyed, the promised blessings have been realized.”⁶

This was well illustrated in my father’s patriarchal blessing. He was told in his blessing that he would be blessed with “many beautiful daughters.” He and my mother became the parents of five sons. No daughters were born to them, but they treated the wives of their sons as daughters. Some years ago when we had a family gathering, I saw my father’s daughters-in-law, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters moving about, tending to the food and ministering to the young children and the elderly, and the realization came to me that Father’s blessing literally had been fulfilled. He has indeed many beautiful daughters. The patriarch who gave my father his blessing had spiritual vision to see beyond this life. The dividing line between time and eternity disappeared.

Declaration of lineage

The Church is expanding at a tremendous rate. We now have stakes of Zion in a great many countries of the

world, and most stakes have at least one patriarch. This growth permits many people across the earth the privilege of receiving patriarchal blessings. As President Joseph Fielding Smith stated, “The great *majority* of those who become members of the Church are *literal descendants* of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph.”⁷ However, Manasseh, the other son of Joseph, as well as the other sons of Jacob, has many descendants in the Church. There may be some come into the Church in our day who are not of Jacob’s blood lineage. No one need assume that he or she will be denied any blessing by reason of not being of the blood lineage of Israel. The Lord told Abraham, “And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father.”⁸

Nephi tells us that “as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord.”⁹ Therefore it makes no difference if the blessings of the house of Israel come by lineage or by adoption.

Some might be disturbed because members of the same family have blessings declaring them to be of a different lineage. A few families are of a mixed lineage. We believe that the house of Israel today constitutes a large measure of the human family. Because the tribes have intermixed one with another, one child may be declared to be from the tribe of Ephraim and another of the same family from Manasseh or one of the other tribes. The blessing of one tribe, therefore, may be dominant in one child, and the blessing of another tribe dominant in yet another child. So children from the same parents could receive the blessings of different tribes.

The power of priesthood blessings

One of the principal reasons for my speaking about this subject is that patriar-

chal blessings and other blessings testify of the divinity of Christ and the truthfulness of the Church. These sacred blessings also strengthen the lives of those worthy persons who receive such blessings. Thus father's blessings, patriarchal blessings, and other blessings are a remarkable privilege which can come to faithful members with sufficient maturity to understand the nature and importance of the blessings. These individualized priesthood blessings are a powerful witness of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in seeking to bring exaltation to each of us. They are our personal revelation from God.

Our blessings can encourage us when we are discouraged, strengthen us when we are fearful, comfort us when we sorrow, give us courage when we are filled with anxiety, and lift us up when we are weak in spirit. Our testimonies can be strengthened every time we read our patriarchal blessings.

Like the images in my grandmother's magnifying glass, we can become stronger, our talents and ability can be magnified and multiplied, our understanding can be greatly enlarged, and our spirituality can flower. Moroni taught that "every good gift cometh of Christ."¹⁰ But the Lord said, "What doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift?"¹¹

Live so that blessings can be fulfilled

I humbly and prayerfully urge any who for any reason may not have lived so as to realize a fulfillment of the priesthood blessings pronounced upon them to so order their lives as to reclaim those blessings.

I charge the faithful members of this church to seek to understand the full significance of your blessings. Gifts may have been bestowed upon you of which you are unaware. These gifts can be of both a profoundly spiritual and temporal nature. I pray that we may all receive our gifts.

In so doing our understanding, our faith, and our testimony in the Lord Jesus Christ will be increased. I humbly so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:17.
2. Genesis 32:24, 26-28.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 86:9-10.
4. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham, 3 vols. in 1 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), p. 321.
5. Quoted in James R. Clark, comp., *Messengers of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 5:152.
6. *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 323.
7. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:246.
8. Abraham 2:10.
9. 2 Nephi 30:2.
10. Moroni 10:18.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 88:33.

The choir sang "When He Comes Again," "Families Can Be Together Forever," and "I Love to See the Temple."

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us. The choir then sang three of our children's songs—"When He Comes Again," "Families Can Be Together Forever," and "I Love to See the Temple."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning." We shall then hear from Elder Robert E. Wells of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Robert E. Wells

On this Sabbath morning I have chosen as my text our unique, three-part, Christ-focused message to the world.

The divine Sonship of Jesus Christ

First is the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, which is central to understanding the entire plan of salvation. He is the First Begotten Son of the Father in the premortal existence and the Only Begotten Son of the Father on earth. God the Eternal Father is the literal parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of His other spirit children (see 1 Nephi 11:18, 21; James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924], p. 466).

When we refer to the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, we are also referring to His role as a God in the premortal sphere. This Firstborn Son of Elohim the Father was chosen and ordained in the primeval councils in heaven to be the Savior of the yet-to-be-born race of mortals (see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916], p. 4). Jesus was also chosen and sent by the Father to organize and create this earth, our solar system, our galaxy, even worlds without number.

Jesus Christ was and is Jehovah of the Old Testament, the God of Adam and of Noah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jehovah appeared to and talked to the ancient prophets. When He spoke He did so on behalf of the Father, and He said what His Father would have said. Jehovah of the Old Testament became Jesus Christ of the New Testament when He was born into mortality.

The "divine Sonship" also refers to the designation "Only Begotten Son in the flesh." Ancient and modern scriptures use the title "Only Begotten Son" to emphasize the divine nature of Jesus

Christ. This title signifies that Jesus' physical body was the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal Eternal Father, which verity is crucial to the Atonement, a supreme act that could not have been accomplished by an ordinary man. Christ had power to lay down His life and power to take it up again because He had inherited immortality from His Heavenly Father. From Mary, His mother, Christ inherited mortality, or the power to die.

This infinite atonement of Christ and Christ's divine Sonship go together hand in hand to form the single most important doctrine of all Christianity. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, "We view the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ as the center and core and heart of revealed religion" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], p. 81). The book of Alma declared, "This is the whole meaning of the law" (34:14).

The divine mission of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon

The second part of our gospel message and central to the Restoration is the divine mission of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon to bring people unto Christ.

We declare that the heavens opened to Joseph Smith and a pillar of light descended brighter than the noonday sun. In that pillar stood two personages—God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ—whose brightness and glory defied all description. The Father spoke, saying, Joseph, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

One of the hallmarks of the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith was his divine education in the writings and prophecies of the ancient apostles and prophets. The writings and teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith "read like a seamless gospel

fabric, woven from the sacred truths of ancient and modern scripture" (Richard C. Galbraith, introduction to *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993], p. 5).

Joseph Smith was much more than an uneducated plowboy of the American frontier. Rather, in the process of his divine education he received the greatest heavenly tutorials ever given to man. He received direct answer to prayer from God, not from books. After the First Vision he received other visions and numerous visits from angelic ministers, and "he was taught for years by . . . holy angels sent from God out of heaven to teach and instruct him and prepare him to lay the foundation of this Church" (Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:265). The inspiration of the Holy Ghost was likewise fundamental in Joseph's expounding of biblical scripture. He received revelations from Jesus Christ, and the Urim and Thummim provided another means by which Joseph Smith received scriptural instructions.

The eternal truths he taught answered a brood of questions that had been in the minds of philosophers for centuries. When one studies the doctrinal teachings revealed to Joseph Smith, that person, if he or she is sincere in the search for truth, will be led to Jesus Christ and His role as our Savior, Redeemer, and Advocate with the Father. In studying these teachings of Joseph about the Savior, uncertainty and doubt flee, and hearts are changed. The honest person finds greater meaning in life by the Prophet's answers to the philosophical questions, Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? Because of revelations given to Joseph, the memory veil between this life and our premortal existence becomes almost transparent at times. And the veil between this life and the spirit world becomes thinner, causing family ties to

become stronger, sweeter, and more meaningful as the hearts of the children turn to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers turn to their children.

The Prophet Joseph taught that the same sociality that we enjoy in this life will continue into the next, giving great comfort to those seeing friends and loved ones depart from this earth (see D&C 130:2). The doctrines of salvation taught by this prophet distill upon our souls as the very dews from heaven (see D&C 121:45). Joseph taught eternal truths that lead those who hunger and thirst for righteousness to the living Christ and to the bosom of God the Father.

Like Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon is a divine instrument to draw the reader closer to Christ. It is a collection of writings by prophets who lived in the Western Hemisphere, who believed in Christ, and who prophesied of Christ, some of whom associated with Christ during the brief time He visited the Americas after His resurrection. Those ancient American prophets wrote the Book of Mormon for our day. It has withstood every conceivable test by both skeptical and sincere minds. It is not on trial. We are the ones on trial, being tested by our acceptance or rejection of its truths, teachings, commandments, and declarations (see 2 Nephi 33:11-14).

President Ezra Taft Benson reminded us forcefully that if we forget to teach and preach the Book of Mormon, and if we forget to study and meditate on the contents of this book of Holy Writ, we will be under condemnation. We have a mission and a commandment to declare its contents to the world and to bear testimony of it (see D&C 84:54-58).

The divine nature of the Church

Our third declaration is the divine nature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ. This

church has received from on high the restoration of the divine authority to have and to exercise the priesthood of Jesus Christ and to use this priesthood in performing the requisite saving ordinances so that they are recorded in heaven as well as on earth.

The restoration referred to was essential to the Second Coming because a study of ecclesiastical history shows that the original laws had been transgressed, the original ordinances had been changed, and the everlasting covenants had been broken, just as Isaiah had prophesied many centuries before (see Isaiah 24:5). Furthermore, Paul had warned that the Second Coming would occur only after a falling away from the original teachings of Christ and the Apostles (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

To prepare the way for the Second Coming, the Restoration took place—through Joseph Smith—of every necessary doctrine and sacred ordinance given by God to the prophets of past dispensations, including the Christ-focused temple ordinances.

We have, in original form, everything that has ever been brought to earth that is part of the great Plan of Salvation—nothing altered, nothing modified. We believe in the same priesthood authority held by the ancients; the same

organization as the primitive Church, headed by apostles and prophets; the same spiritual gifts; the same ancient scriptures as well as new latter-day scriptures—the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

I pray that we each will see how great the importance is to gain an understanding, through diligent and prayerful study, of the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ—the Savior of the world; that Joseph Smith's divine mission was to bring about the restoration of the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and also the Book of Mormon, which is indeed another witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God; and that this church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is “the Lord's kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah” (introduction to the Book of Mormon). I so declare in all humility and testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Robert E. Wells of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

“This do in remembrance of me”

The hours that lay immediately ahead would change the meaning of all human history. It would be the crowning moment of eternity, the most miraculous of all the miracles. It would be the supreme contribution to a plan designed from before the foundation of the world for the happiness of every man, woman,

and child who would ever live in it. The hour of atoning sacrifice had come. God's own Son, His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, was about to become the Savior of the world.

The setting was Jerusalem. The season was that of the Passover, a celebration rich in symbolism for what was about to come. Long ago the troubled and enslaved Israelites had been “passed over,”

spared, finally made free by the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the lintel and doorposts of their Egyptian homes (see Exodus 12:21-24). That, in turn, had been only a symbolic reiteration of what Adam and all succeeding prophets were taught from the beginning—that the pure and unblemished lambs offered from the firstlings of Israel's flocks were a similitude, a token, a prefiguration of the great and last sacrifice of Christ which was to come (see Moses 5:5-8).

Now, after all those years and all those prophecies and all those symbolic offerings, the type and shadow was to become reality. On this night when Jesus' mortal ministry was concluding, the declaration made by John the Baptist when that ministry had begun now meant more than ever—"Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

As a final and specially prepared Passover supper was ending, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His Apostles, saying, "Take, eat" (Matthew 26:26). "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). In a similar manner He took the cup of wine, traditionally diluted with water, said a blessing of thanks for it, and passed it to those gathered about Him, saying: "This cup is the new testament in my blood," "which is shed . . . for the remission of sins." "This do in remembrance of me." "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (Luke 22:20; Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:26).

The sacrament—our passover

Since that upper room experience on the eve of Gethsemane and Golgotha, children of the promise have been under covenant to remember Christ's sacrifice in this newer, higher, more holy and personal way.

With a crust of bread, always broken, blessed, and offered first, we remember

His bruised body and broken heart, His physical suffering on the cross where He cried, "I thirst," and finally, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (John 19:28; Matthew 27:46).

The Savior's physical suffering guarantees that through His mercy and grace (see 2 Nephi 2:8) every member of the human family shall be freed from the bonds of death and be resurrected triumphantly from the grave. Of course the time of that resurrection and the degree of exaltation it leads to are based upon our faithfulness.

With a small cup of water we remember the shedding of Christ's blood and the depth of His spiritual suffering, anguish which began in the Garden of Gethsemane. There He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). He was in agony and "prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

The Savior's spiritual suffering and the shedding of His innocent blood, so lovingly and freely given, paid the debt for what the scriptures call the "original guilt" of Adam's transgression (Moses 6:54). Furthermore, Christ suffered for the sins and sorrows and pains of all the rest of the human family, providing remission for all of our sins as well, upon conditions of obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel He taught (see 2 Nephi 9:21-23). As the Apostle Paul wrote, we were "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). What an expensive price and what a merciful purchase!

That is why every ordinance of the gospel focuses in one way or another on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and surely that is why this particular ordinance with all its symbolism and imagery comes to us more readily and more repeatedly than any other in our life. It comes in what has been called "*the most sacred, the most holy*, of all the meetings

of the Church" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 2:340).

Perhaps we do not always attach that kind of meaning to our weekly sacramental service. How "sacred" and how "holy" is it? Do we see it as *our* passover, remembrance of *our* safety and deliverance and redemption?

With so very much at stake, this ordinance commemorating our escape from the angel of darkness should be taken more seriously than it sometimes is. It should be a powerful, reverent, reflective moment. It should encourage spiritual feelings and impressions. As such it should not be rushed. It is not something to "get over" so that the real purpose of a sacrament meeting can be pursued. This *is* the real purpose of the meeting. And everything that is said or sung or prayed in those services should be consistent with the grandeur of this sacred ordinance.

Privilege of Aaronic Priesthood holders

The administration and passing of the sacrament is preceded by a hymn which all of us should sing. It doesn't matter what kind of musical voice we have. Sacramental hymns are more like prayers anyway—and everyone can give voice to a prayer!

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains he had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.
["There Is a Green Hill Far Away,"
Hymns, no. 194]

It is an important element of our worship to unite in such lyrical and moving expressions of gratitude.

In that sacred setting we ask you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood to prepare and bless and pass these emblems of the Savior's sacrifice worthily

and reverently. What a stunning privilege and sacred trust given at such a remarkably young age! I can think of no higher compliment heaven could pay you. We do love you. Live your best and look your best when you participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

May I suggest that wherever possible a white shirt be worn by the deacons, teachers, and priests who handle the sacrament. For sacred ordinances in the Church we often use ceremonial clothing, and a white shirt could be seen as a gentle reminder of the white clothing you wore in the baptismal font and an anticipation of the white shirt you will soon wear into the temple and on your missions.

That simple suggestion is not intended to be pharisaic or formalistic. We do not want deacons or priests in uniforms or unduly concerned about anything but the purity of their lives. But how our young people dress can teach a holy principle to us all, and it certainly can convey sanctity. As President David O. McKay taught, a white shirt contributes to the sacredness of the holy sacrament (see Conference Report, Oct. 1956, p. 89).

Sacramental prayers

In the simple and beautiful language of the sacramental prayers those young priests offer, the principal word we hear seems to be *remember*. In the first and slightly longer prayer offered over the bread, mention is made of a willingness to take upon us the name of the Son of God and to keep the commandments He has given us.

Neither of those phrases is repeated in the blessing on the water, though surely both are assumed and expected. What *is* stressed in both prayers is that all of this is done in remembrance of Christ. In so participating we witness that we will always remember Him, that

we may always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77, 79).

Remember His premortal life and birth

If remembering is the principal task before us, what might come to our memory when those plain and precious emblems are offered to us?

We could remember the Savior's premortal life and all that we know Him to have done as the great Jehovah, creator of heaven and earth and all things that in them are. We could remember that even in the Grand Council of Heaven He loved us and was wonderfully strong, that we triumphed even there by the power of Christ and our faith in the blood of the Lamb (see Revelation 12:10–11).

We could remember the simple grandeur of His mortal birth to just a young woman, one probably in the age range of those in our Young Women organization, who spoke for every faithful woman in every dispensation of time when she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

We could remember His magnificent but virtually unknown foster father, a humble carpenter by trade who taught us, among other things, that quiet, plain, unpretentious people have moved this majestic work forward from the very beginning and still do so today. If you are serving almost anonymously, please know that so, too, did one of the best men who has ever lived on this earth.

Remember His example and teachings

We could remember Christ's miracles and His teachings, His healings and His help. We could remember that He gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and motion to the lame and the maimed and the withered. Then, on those days when we feel our progress has halted or our joys and views have grown dim, we can press forward steadfastly in

Christ, with unshaken faith in Him and a perfect brightness of hope (see 2 Nephi 31:19–20).

We could remember that even with such a solemn mission given to Him, the Savior found delight in living; He enjoyed people and told His disciples to be of good cheer. He said we should be as thrilled with the gospel as one who had found a great treasure, a veritable pearl of great price, right on our own doorstep. We could remember that Jesus found special joy and happiness in children and said all of us should be more like them—guileless and pure, quick to laugh and to love and to forgive, slow to remember any offense.

We could remember that Christ called His disciples friends and that friends are those who stand by us in times of loneliness or potential despair. We could remember a friend we need to contact or, better yet, a friend we need to make. In doing so we could remember that God often provides His blessings through the compassionate and timely response of another. For someone nearby we may be the means of heaven's answer to a very urgent prayer.

We could—and should—remember the wonderful things that have come to us in our lives and that "all things which are good cometh of Christ" (Moroni 7:24). Those of us who are so blessed could remember the courage of those around us who face more difficulty than we but who remain cheerful, who do the best they can, and trust that the Bright and Morning Star will rise again for them—as surely He will do (see Revelation 22:16).

Remember His response to adversity

On some days we will have cause to remember the unkind treatment He received, the rejection He experienced, and the injustice—oh, the injustice—He endured. When we, too, then face some of that in life, we can remember that Christ was also troubled on every side, but not

distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (see 2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

When those difficult times come to us, we can remember that Jesus had to descend below all things before He could ascend above them, and that He suffered pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind that He might be filled with mercy and know how to succor His people in their infirmities (see D&C 88:6; Alma 7:11-12).

Remember what His wounds signify

To those who stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end He is there to save us, and for all this He gave His life. However dim our days may seem, they have been darker for the Savior of the world.

In fact, in a resurrected, otherwise perfected body, our Lord of this sacrament table has chosen to retain for the benefit of His disciples the wounds in His hands and His feet and His side—signs, if you will, that painful things happen even to the pure and perfect; signs, if you will, that pain in this world is *not* evidence that God doesn't love you. It is the *wounded* Christ who is the captain of our soul—He who yet bears the scars of sacrifice, the lesions of love and humility and forgiveness.

Those wounds are what He invites young and old, then and now, to step forward and see and feel (see 3 Nephi 11:15; 18:25). Then we remember with Isaiah that it was for each of us that our Master was “despised and rejected . . . ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). All this we could remember when we are invited by a kneeling young priest to remember Christ always.

Fortified by the sacramental feast

We no longer include a supper with this ordinance, but it is a feast nevertheless. We can be fortified by it for whatever life requires of us, and in so doing we will be more compassionate to others along the way.

One request Christ made of His disciples on that night of deep anguish and grief was that they stand by Him, stay with Him in His hour of sorrow and pain. “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” He asked longingly (Matthew 26:40). I think He asks that again of us every Sabbath day when the emblems of His life are broken and blessed and passed.

How great the wisdom and the love
That filled the courts on high
And sent the Savior from above
To suffer, bleed, and die!
[“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, no. 195]

“Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!” (“I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns*, no. 193). I bear witness of Him who is the Wonder of it all, and I do so in His own name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang “Awake and Arise.”

President Hinckley

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us, and the choir has sung “Awake and Arise.” It's all right to awake, but please don't arise until I get through speaking!

Following my remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing “Where Love Is,” and the benediction will be offered by Elder Carlos H. Amado of the Seventy. The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A personal consecration

My brethren and sisters, thank you for your sustaining hands and hearts and for your expressions of confidence and love. My faith in this great work has been strengthened by what I have seen and heard as I have traveled among you during the past six months.

I have a desire to get out with the Latter-day Saints across the world, to look into your faces, to shake your hands wherever possible, to share with you in a more personal and intimate way my feelings concerning this sacred work, and to feel of your spirit and your love of the Lord and His mighty cause. I wish I had some way to thank you individually for the kindness you have shown us in so many ways. I know that your respect, confidence, and love are to be earned through the service that we give. I have only one desire, and that is that while the Lord gives me strength I may serve Him faithfully and well through service to His sons and daughters, you my brethren and sisters. To that end I consecrate my strength, my time, and whatever talent I may possess.

Expressions of love and faith

I love this church. I love the Prophet Joseph, to whom God our Eternal Father and the Risen Lord spoke with that same intimacy with which I speak with you today. I feel love for all of those who accepted his testimony in those early and difficult years. Their lives in large measure constitute the early history of this work. It is a wonderful thing to have strong and deep roots. From them has grown the great worldwide movement we know as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I thank the Lord that He planted in my heart while I was yet a boy a love for the Prophet Joseph Smith, a love for the Book of Mormon, a love for those great

men and women who endured so much in establishing a foundation on which to build this cause and kingdom. I love the priesthood which is among us, this authority given to men to speak in the name of God. I am grateful for its power and authority, which reach even beyond the veil of death. I love the Saints wherever they walk in faith and faithfulness. I am thankful for the strength of your testimonies and for the goodness of your lives. I love the missionaries who are out on the front line of the world bearing testimony of the restoration of the gospel. I pray for them that they may be protected and that they may be led to those who will receive their message.

I love the youth of this church, so very many of them who are eager in their ways, who are searching for truth, who pray and try to do the right thing. I feel great love and respect for the women of the Relief Society, for the young women in their organization, for the Primary children, who are beautiful wherever they are regardless of the color of their skin or the circumstances in which they live.

I feel a great sense of gratitude for our bishops and those who serve with them, for our presidents of stakes and their associates, for the newly called Area Authorities, and for my brethren of the General Authorities.

Expansion of the Church

I have a strong, uplifting sense of optimism concerning this work. I have lived long enough now to have seen the miracle of its growth. Mine has been the favored lot of assisting in its establishment across much of the world. Everywhere it is growing stronger. Everywhere it is touching an increasing number of lives for good.

Our statisticians tell me that if the present trend continues, then sometime in February of 1996, just a few months

from now, there will be more members of the Church outside the United States than in the United States.

The crossover of that line is a wonderfully significant thing. It represents the fruit of a tremendous outreach. The God of Heaven, whose servants we are, never intended that this should be a narrow, parochial work. John the Revelator "saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6). That angel has come. His name is Moroni. His is a voice speaking from the dust, bringing another witness of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have not as yet carried the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. But we have made great strides. We have gone wherever we are permitted to go. God is at the helm, and doors will be opened by His power according to His divine will. Of that I am confident. Of that I am certain.

I cannot understand those of small vision, who regard this work as limited and provincial. They have no expanding view of it. As certainly as there is an Almighty Father in Heaven, as surely as there is His Son, our Divine Redeemer, so certainly is this work destined to reach out to people everywhere.

Joshua and Caleb bring a good report

The story of Caleb and Joshua and the other spies of Israel has always intrigued me. Moses led the children of Israel into the wilderness. In the second year of their wandering, he chose a representative from each of the twelve tribes to search the land of Canaan and bring back a report concerning its resources and its people. Caleb represented the tribe of Judah, Joshua the tribe of Ephraim. The twelve of them went into the land of Canaan. They found it to be fruitful. They were gone forty days. They brought back

with them some of "the firstripe grapes" as evidence of the productivity of the land (Numbers 13:20).

They came before Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel, and they said concerning the land of Canaan, "Surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it" (v. 27).

But ten of the spies were victims of their own doubts and fears. They gave a negative report of the numbers and stature of the Canaanites. They concluded that "they are stronger than we" (v. 31). They compared themselves as grasshoppers to the giants they had seen in the land. They were the victims of their own timidity.

Then Joshua and Caleb stood before the people and said:

"The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

"If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

"Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Numbers 14:7-9).

But the people were more willing to believe the ten doubters than to believe Caleb and Joshua.

Then it was that the Lord declared that the children of Israel should wander in the wilderness forty years until the generation of those who had walked with doubt and fear should pass away. The scripture records that "those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord.

"But Joshua . . . and Caleb . . . , which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still" (vv. 37-38). They were the only ones of that group who survived through those four decades of wandering and who had the privilege of entering the promised land concerning which they had reported in a positive manner.

Gospel is good news, not doom and gloom

We see some around us who are indifferent concerning the future of this work, who are apathetic, who speak of limitations, who express fears, who spend their time digging out and writing about what they regard to be weaknesses which really are of no consequence. With doubt concerning its past, they have no vision concerning its future.

Well was it said of old, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). There is no place in this work for those who believe only in the gospel of doom and gloom. The gospel is good news. It is a message of triumph. It is a cause to be embraced with enthusiasm.

The Lord never said that there would not be troubles. Our people have known afflictions of every sort as those who have opposed this work have come upon them. But faith has shown through all their sorrows. This work has consistently moved forward and has never taken a backward step since its inception. I think of the boy Joseph persecuted and ridiculed by those his senior. But the pain of the wounds of that persecution was tempered by the declaration of Moroni, who told him that God had a work for him to do and that his name "should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

He and his brother Hyrum were murdered June 27, 1844. Their enemies thought that this would end the cause for which they had given their lives. Little did they realize that the blood of the martyrs would give nurture to the young roots of the Church.

Pioneers' faith rose above doubts

I stood the other day on the old docks of Liverpool, England. There was practically no activity the Friday morning

when we were there. But once this was a veritable beehive. During the 1800s, tens of thousands of our people walked over the same stone paving on which we walked. They came from across the British Isles and from the lands of Europe, converts to the Church. They came with testimony on their lips and faith in their hearts. Was it difficult to leave their homes and step into the unknown of a new world? Of course it was. But they did it with optimism and enthusiasm. They boarded sailing vessels. They knew the crossing at best was hazardous. They soon found out that for the most part it was miserable. They lived in cramped quarters week after week. They endured storms, disease, sickness. Many died on the way and were buried at sea. It was an arduous and fearsome journey. They had doubts, yes. But their faith rose above those doubts. Their optimism rose above their fears. They had their dream of Zion, and they were on their way to fulfill it.

With a great overpowering spirit of optimism, based on a solid bedrock of faith, they built this Tabernacle in which we meet this day. Through forty years they constructed the temple just to the east of us. Through all their travail was a shining, bright, and wonderful vision concerning the growth of this work.

I can scarcely comprehend the magnitude of Brigham Young's faith in leading thousands of people into the wilderness. He had never seen this country, except as he had seen it in vision. It was an act of boldness almost beyond comprehension. For him their coming here was all part of the grand pattern of the growth and destiny of this work. To those who followed him it was the pursuit of a great dream.

So it was in the latter part of the last century. It seemed the whole world stood against us. But the faithful knew there was sunlight behind those dark clouds and that if they held on the storm would pass.

To those who have drifted away

Today we walk in the sunlight of goodwill. There is a tendency on the part of some to become indifferent. There are those who drift off, seeking the enticements of the world, forsaking the cause of the Lord. I see others who think it is all right to lower their standards, perhaps in small ways. In this very process they lose the cutting edge of enthusiasm for this work. For instance, they think the violation of the Sabbath is a thing of unimportance. They neglect their meetings. They become critical. They engage in backbiting. Before long they have drifted from the Church.

The Prophet Joseph once declared, "Where doubt is, there faith has no power" (*Lectures on Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], p. 46).

I invite any who may have so drifted to come back to the strong and solid moorings of the Church. This is the work of the Almighty. Whether we as individuals go forward will depend on us. But the Church will never fail to move forward. I remember an old song rendered in stirring tones by a male chorus: "Start me with ten who are stouthearted men, and I'll soon give you ten thousand more." (Oscar Hammerstein II, "Stouthearted Men").

When the Lord took Moses unto Himself, He then said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9). This is His work. Never forget it. Embrace it with enthusiasm and affection.

Let us not be afraid. Jesus is our leader, our strength, and our king.

A call to move the work forward

This is an age of pessimism. Ours is a mission of faith. To my brethren and sisters everywhere, I call upon you to reaffirm your faith, to move this work

forward across the world. You can make it stronger by the manner in which you live. Let the gospel be your sword and your shield. Each of us is a part of the greatest cause on earth. Its doctrine came of revelation. Its priesthood came of divine bestowal. Another witness has been added to its testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is literally the little stone of Daniel's dream which was "cut out of the mountain without hands [to] roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

"Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!" (D&C 128:22). So wrote the Prophet Joseph in a psalm of faith.

How glorious is the past of this great cause. It is filled with heroism, courage, boldness, and faith. How wondrous is the present as we move forward to bless the lives of people wherever they will hearken to the message of the servants of the Lord. How magnificent will be the future as the Almighty rolls on His glorious work, touching for good all who will accept and live His gospel and even reaching to the eternal blessing of His sons and daughters of all generations through the selfless work of those whose hearts are filled with love for the Redeemer of the world.

Stay the course; keep the faith

Back in the days of the Great Depression, an old sign dangled by one staple from a piece of rusting barbed wire. The owner of the farm had written:

Burned out by drought,
Drowned out by flud waters,
Et out by jackrabbits,
Sold out by sheriff,
Still here!

So it is with us. There have been makers of threats, naysayers, and criers of doom. They have tried in every con-

ceivable way to injure and destroy this church. But we are still here, stronger and more determined to move it forward. To me it is exciting. It is wonderful. I feel like Ammon of old who said: "Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding" (Alma 26:35).

I invite every one of you, wherever you may be as members of this church, to stand on your feet and with a song in your heart move forward, living the gospel, loving the Lord, and building the kingdom. Together we shall stay the course and keep the faith, the Almighty being our strength. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Where Love Is."

Elder Carlos H. Amado offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 165th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 1, 1995. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We welcome you this lovely afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 165th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We note that Richard G. Scott, John H. Groberg, and James O. Mason are seated on the stand in the Assembly Hall, and Elders Angel Abrea and Lance B. Wickman are in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and to many

friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We also welcome distinguished guests who are with us.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop, newly appointed associate director, and accompanied by John Longhurst, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "For the Strength of the Hills." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the Seventy.

The choir sang "For the Strength of the Hills."

Elder Rex D. Pinegar offered the invocation.

President Monson

Thank you, Brother Pinegar.

The choir will now sing "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah." Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Saints, Behold How Great Jehovah."

Elder David B. Haight

Getting along in years

As some of us get older, we slow down, so you'll have to tolerate us a little. I thank the Lord for His blessings to me and that I am able to attend this conference and hear what we have heard so far. This is a momentous period in our Church history.

When Elder LeGrand Richards was getting along in years, he generally gave extemporaneous conference talks. As you know, we have some time restraints. There was concern as to how to notify him when his time was up. A little flashing light was put on the podium, and during one of his talks he said, "There's a light here that keeps flashing." The next conference they made the light red, but he just put his hand over it. So I might resort to some of that today. As we age, we get to the point where the teleprompter doesn't work for us anymore; then the printers seem to be doing a poor job in printing the text; and then the ink doesn't seem to be as good as it used to be either! But I am honored and grateful to be here with you.

Faithfulness brings strength

I am sure that those of you who were here this morning felt as I did as we listened to our prophet and leader: that the mantle of God's prophet rests comfortably and with divine authority on President Gordon B. Hinckley. I felt that as he spelled out his words of counsel to us this morning with such firm direction and inspiration, encouraging us to raise our sights for achievement, the Lord's voice was being heard. In the eighty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord teaches us that His voice is Spirit (see v. 66).

I am thankful not only to be here, but I am thankful for good music and for the influence of good music in our lives

and for this number that the choir sang this morning, "For the Strength of the Hills" (*Hymns*, no. 35). As the choir was singing those words, I was thinking of the strength that I have felt not only in this conference but throughout my life—the strength that we receive by being faithful, obedient members of the Church. Living as we should becomes our strength of character.

Parents' arduous journey to the temple

My grandfather had been living in Farmington, Utah, for a few years before he and his family were asked to go out into south-central Idaho and help settle a new community to be named Oakley. My father, Hector, was a teenager when they moved. My mother, Clara, was a teenager living in Tooele, Utah, when her father was asked to move to Oakley and build the first flour mill there. And so Hector and Clara fell in love out in that little Idaho town.

When it was time to be married in 1890, they didn't ask where they would be married and what they would do. They knew what to do. I remind those of you who may not have your geography straight that in that part of Idaho it is about 180 miles to the Logan Temple. But my parents went to the Logan Temple from that little town to be married on May 15, 1890. I've often wondered how they made the trip. Imagine one of the old double-seat surrey buggies without any sides on it, pulled by a team of horses. In spite of spring rains, they set out to go 180 miles in the buggy.

I don't know how many were in the company, but if you would imagine a modern automobile with its steel top, glass sides, heaters, radio, comfortable seats by the side of that buggy, you would see a great difference. Imagine those young people with some of their party organizing to travel 180 miles. It

would take a week. They set out to make the seven-day trip to the temple in that buggy. They were without sleeping bags or winter clothing as we know it today, but they had clothing that was appropriate for that time—blankets and quilts—and some flour sacks filled with food.

So when we sing about the strength of the hills, we should thank the Lord for the strength of where we are and who we are and what we believe in and how we live. Are the young people today wondering if it would be inconvenient for them to go a few miles to the Manti Temple or the St. George Temple or the Atlanta Georgia Temple or even to the Stockholm Sweden Temple or the Johannesburg South Africa Temple or wherever it might be? Picture in your minds what went on only a few years ago, and your travel to a temple will not seem so inconvenient.

Sixty-five wonderful years of marriage

My wife, Ruby, and I recently celebrated our sixty-fifth wedding anniversary. We were married in the Salt Lake Temple on September 4, 1930. The next morning we went up to see her mother on M Street in Salt Lake City to bid her good-bye. And as part of those tender moments, she fixed a little basket for us to put in the car. She said to me, "David, promise me that you'll take good care of Ruby." And I said, "I promise." I remind Ruby periodically that someday I'm going to meet her mother, and I hope I will be able to look her straight in the eye and say, "I think maybe I've done it."

Ruby and I were married the right way, sealed in the temple with its divine covenants and commitments that promote trustworthiness, faithfulness, devotion, and dedication. Now, after sixty-five wonderful years, we look back on our time together and realize that it gets better as time goes on.

Journey to California

When Ruby and I left for California in 1930 in our little Model T Ford, we crossed Nevada going a hundred miles an hour on those gravel, washboard roads—thirty miles straight ahead and seventy miles up and down. We'd never been to California before, so when we finally made it to Lake Tahoe, that large lake looked warm and beautiful. I didn't know that it was icy cold under the first inch of water. We found a little motel and went in and put on our swimsuits. I wanted to demonstrate to her that she had married a real "he-man." We went on the pier out in the lake, and I thought it looked so wonderful. The sun was just going down. I dove straight down, to demonstrate to Ruby what a "find" she had made. As I dove through the icy water farther down, I thought I was a goner. I clamored to get out.

We had a wonderful time together as we drove on to Berkeley, California. We found a furnished apartment for forty-five dollars a month. But our second day, when I came home that evening, I discovered that my key wouldn't work in the door. I finally went to the manager and said, "I'm sorry, my key doesn't work." She said, "Oh, that's all right. Your wife has moved you." I said, "Moved us?" "Yes," she said, "we had another apartment that was five dollars less."

Seek first the kingdom of God

Well, Ruby and I figured out one day that we have moved around the United States twenty-seven times. We moved to California on three different occasions. We moved to Illinois twice. We've moved back and forth and around. But out of that, we look back upon it all with joy. Now, with our three children and our fifty-plus grand- and great-grandchildren, we say, "What a wonderful life has been ours."

If we seek first the kingdom of God and live as we should, all the rest of life seems to fall into place and wonderful things happen. So as we look upon our family, we are pleased that all who could of our grandsons and some of our granddaughters have served missions. They all understand and can sing "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301) and other wonderful songs of Zion. We're proud of them. One member of our family has a little painting, a watercolor, not made by a famous artist. The painting was made by some Armenian children. It was given as a gift of thanks in return for a gift of life because some of the family and some of the grandchildren helped get food across the border into Armenia. Life is rich and full and wonderful. It all falls into place if we help it by the way we live.

George Romney

A few weeks ago, Ruby and I were up in Oakley, Idaho, for a couple of days, restoring our old family home. I had a phone call from Lenore Romney in Detroit, Michigan. Lenore is the wife of George Romney. She said, "George died this morning." She wanted to know if I could arrange to attend the funeral. I told her I would be honored to come but that I would need to arrange it with those who are my superiors in the Church.

After I hung up the phone, I walked up the street from our old family home. I walked across the canal over to the area where the Romneys used to live. George's father's name was Gaskell Romney. My father was their bishop. I looked at the area. The house wasn't there anymore. Then I walked along the old irrigation canal bank. I looked at the area where my father baptized me. I looked at where George and I used to swim. Swimming suits in those days were a pair of bib overalls, not the high-fashion kind you see today but the real denim, old-fashioned bib overalls. We

cut the legs off and cut the pockets out so we wouldn't drown. That's all we had for swimming suits. We used to sit on the canal bank in a little bit of sunshine and shiver because it was so cold. But swimming was our main recreation. George and I were about the same age. He was my friend. He was my pal.

As I walked along the canal bank, thinking about George, I thought of a poem by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét that they had written about Nancy Hanks, the mother of Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was only seven when Nancy Hanks died, and they loved each other very much. But in that tender poem the Benéts reflected that if Nancy Hanks came back today, she might ask, "Whatever happened to my boy, Abe? Did he get to town? Did he learn to read? Did he ever amount to anything?" (See "Nancy Hanks," in Edwin Markham, comp., *The Book of American Poetry* [New York: Wm. H. Wise and Co., 1936], pp. 791-92.)

George's mother had died while he was a teenager. She didn't get to see what he became. At the funeral I was honored to be there with the governor of the state of Michigan—a state of some nine million people, where George had been elected governor three times. The governor said George Romney was a great man who never allowed service to man to obscure service to God. The *Detroit News* said George Romney used his religion as a compass to chart his public life.

I leave you my love, my witness, and my testimony that this work is true. You young people who are wondering about going out into the world and making your way, bear in mind that other people too, who have used the gospel as a compass to guide them, have done pretty well. The gospel is true. We have a living prophet upon the earth. May you live it fully, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Haight, you've not only done pretty well, you've done very well indeed as you have set the pace and established the tone for this conference session. We love you.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Windows of light and truth

My beloved brothers and sisters, as President Hinckley walked into this meeting, he said, "We decided to come back." I replied, "Thank goodness." It's a privilege to speak on this occasion, and I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to be with me.

This is an age of digital information. Our computers have become windows through which we can gaze upon a world that is virtually without horizons or boundaries. Literally at the click of a button, we can browse through the digitized libraries of universities, museums, government agencies, and research institutions located throughout the world. A worldwide web of electronic connections now moves data at ever-increasing speed and volume along what we call the information superhighway. Through the windows of personal computer monitors in homes and offices, we can access this network of interconnected data banks to see texts, art, photos, maps, and charts and to hear music and speech that are stored in widely dispersed locations.

Likewise, instruments of many types give us insight that we would not have without them. Telescopes and microscopes bring to our view the otherwise unseen and unknown. Modern medicine uses imaging "windows" such as magnetic resonance imaging scanners to bring into view otherwise unseen vital information that skilled physicians can use for the benefit of their patients. The air traffic controller's radarscope is an-

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

other example of a window that provides lifesaving vision of faraway objects that are invisible without this crucial instrument. A skilled controller can use the information on his radarscope to guide a pilot to safety.

Windows of revelation

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declares boldly that through another type of window, the windows of heaven, we can access spiritual information from the Source of light and truth. "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."¹ In this dispensation of the fulness of times, the *revelation* superhighway has been carrying heavy traffic of eternal truth ever since that day in the spring of 1820 when the Lord answered a farm boy's fervent prayer in the Sacred Grove and ushered in the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are blessed to live in these, the latter days, when a loving Heavenly Father has called a great leader, President Gordon B. Hinckley, as prophet, seer, and revelator. Through him the Lord opens windows of revelation to guide and bless all of our Father's children who will heed the words of the prophet. Today, as in ancient times, God opens windows of gospel light and truth by revealing "his secret unto his servants the prophets."² Those who have "eyes to see, and ears to hear"³ can learn eternal principles; view

majestic vistas of knowledge, foresight, and wisdom; and receive direction on how to live their lives.

If we configure our hearts and minds properly with faith, disciplined obedience, prayer, and scripture study, we can access the network of divine and eternal truths. We can receive the teachings and counsel of God's prophet, opening to us knowledge and revelation from our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The Lord counsels us to become skilled in using these spiritual windows so we can seek and receive personal revelation for ourselves and our families. When the storms of life leave us confused, the windows of revelation can guide us safely home to our Heavenly Father. If we should yield to temptations of the adversary and find ourselves weakened spiritually, inspired bishops and other caring leaders can open the windows of revelation to provide spiritual direction. Well-prepared and inspired missionaries can open the windows of heaven to enlighten those "who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."⁴

Obedience opens the windows of heaven

The windows of heaven are open wide to the faithful and righteous; nothing closes them faster than disobedience. The unworthy cannot access fully the network of revealed truth. "The powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness."⁵ "Obedience is the first law of heaven."⁶ That is why Alma exhorted us to "be humble, . . . submissive and . . . diligent in keeping the commandments of God at all times."⁷

To open the windows of heaven, we must conform our will to God's will. Diligent, enduring obedience to God's laws is the key that opens the windows of heaven. Obedience enables us to be receptive to the mind and will of the Lord.

"The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient"⁸ are those who receive the blessings of revelation through the open windows of heaven.

Missionary service

The Lord has commanded Church members to "proclaim . . . unto the world"⁹ the restoration of the fulness of the gospel, open the windows of light and truth to all of our brothers and sisters, and do so "with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength."¹⁰ Our Savior has told us that "the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of [his] disciples," who "shall go forth and none shall stay them."¹¹

Members of the Lord's church can joyfully echo these words of the prophet Mormon: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."¹²

We are the Savior's disciples who "shall go forth." All of us are "called of him to [be missionaries to] declare his word among his people." We may serve as full-time missionaries in young adulthood and as older couples. This window of opportunity is opened for a relatively short period of time. We should follow the counsel of President Spencer W. Kimball and "do it," and, he added, "Do it right now." Stake missionaries and loving neighbors have the opportunity of this divine service. We all have the sacred obligation and joyful opportunity to throw open the windows of light and truth by proclaiming the blessings of everlasting life to a darkened world. If we shy away from this responsibility, we should remember that the Lord has promised that "*none shall stay [us]*" and that "there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated."¹³ We can experience no greater joy than to see

the light of the gospel shine in the eyes and face of a newly baptized brother or sister who has "spiritually been born of God," who has "experienced [a] mighty change in [heart]," and who has "the image of God engraven upon [his or her countenance!]"¹⁴

If we are to fulfill the Lord's command to open the windows of heaven to all of our brothers and sisters, we must prepare to teach the gospel. With study of the scriptures, fasting, and prayer, we fortify our testimonies. We cultivate Christlike attributes of "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence."¹⁵ Through exemplary obedience we can "let [our] light so shine before men, that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father which is in heaven."¹⁶ By keeping the commandments we can light our gospel candle and put it "on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto *all* that are in the house."¹⁷

The law of tithing

These words from the third chapter of Malachi have a familiar ring for Latter-day Saints:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."¹⁸

Perhaps we tend to think of the law of tithing as a temporal commandment only and to see it from a material perspective. We would be shortsighted and ungrateful if we failed to see and acknowledge the great spiritual blessings that result from obedience to this divine law. When we are obedient, the windows of heaven are opened not just to pour out blessings of earthly abundance, but also to pour out blessings of spiritual

abundance—blessings of infinite and eternal worth.

President Hinckley has declared that the blessings from paying tithing "may not be always in the form of financial or material benefit." He explained that "there are many ways in which the Lord can bless us beyond the riches of the world. There is the great boon of health. The Lord has promised [in Malachi 3:11] that he will rebuke the devourer for our sakes. Malachi speaks of the fruits of our ground. May not that rebuke of the devourer apply to *various* of our personal efforts and concerns?"¹⁹

The Word of Wisdom

Beginning in 1833 the Prophet Joseph Smith taught the blessings of avoiding tobacco and other addictive substances when the Lord opened the windows of heaven and revealed "a Word of Wisdom, for the benefit of the . . . saints in Zion." The Lord gave this revelation as a warning against the "evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days."²⁰

One of the first articles to document a link between smoking and lung cancer appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1950,²¹ 117 years after the Lord opened this window to His prophet.

The physical blessings of health and strength that are promised²² through obedience to the Word of Wisdom are now well known and well documented.²³ In addition, the spiritual blessings of "wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures,"²⁴ come to those who keep their bodies free from addictive substances. When we obey the Word of Wisdom, windows of personal revelation are opened to us and our souls are filled with divine light and truth. If we keep our bodies undefiled, the Holy Ghost "shall come upon [us] and . . . dwell in [our] heart[s]"²⁵ and teach us "the peaceable things of immortal glory."²⁶

Word of wisdom for the mind

Our Heavenly Father opened the windows of heaven and gave His children the Word of Wisdom to warn against consuming substances that can damage and destroy our physical bodies. He likewise has, through prophets, cautioned against consuming the steady diet of evil that is offered relentlessly in today's media, especially magazines, movies, videocassettes, video games, and television. The windows of computer monitors and television screens can bring to us very useful information, but they can also bring information that is evil, degrading, and destructive.

The Lord has warned repeatedly against the evils and designs of conspiring men in our day who would enslave us to our appetites and passions by tempting and tantalizing us with obscene images, words, and music. Through His servants the Lord has cautioned us strongly not to take into our minds thoughts that can harm our spirits.

Since 1950, Church leaders speaking in general conference have counseled us some seventy-five times against unhealthy media consumption. In recent years, as standards of public decency and morality have declined and as public media have reflected and often led that decline, these words of loving concern from inspired shepherds of the Lord's flock have come with more frequency and greater urgency. The watchmen on the tower have raised a warning voice.

I add my own voice. I suggest that we pay greater heed to voices of warning that our Father in Heaven has raised against the forces of Satan that come so easily and so pervasively into our homes through the media. I think of all the words of counsel and direction that we have received on this matter as constituting collectively a "word of wisdom for the mind." Just as we exercise great care about what we take into our bodies through our mouths, we should exert a

similar vigilance about what we take into our minds through our eyes and ears.

Gift of the Holy Ghost

The gift of the Holy Ghost may be likened to a sure, personal compass to provide lifesaving vision, wisdom, and insight as a spiritual window. The Holy Ghost gives us clear guidance and direction in a world of unanchored faith. President James E. Faust expressed his assuring testimony that "the Spirit of the Holy Ghost is the greatest guarantor of inward peace in our unstable world. . . . It will calm nerves; it will breathe peace to our souls. . . . It can enhance our natural senses so that we can *see more clearly*, hear more keenly, and remember what we should remember. It is a way of maximizing our happiness."²⁷

Worthy worship

Windows must be washed regularly to clean away dust and dirt. If left to accumulate without regular cleaning, thickening grime can block out light and darken the window. Just as earthly windows need consistent, thorough cleaning, so do the windows of our spirituality.

Weekly sacrament meeting attendance helps us strengthen our resolve to keep our personal windows of heaven free from the obscuring haze of earthly distractions and temptations. By partaking of the sacrament worthily to renew our baptismal covenants, we clarify our view of life's eternal purpose and divine priorities. The sacrament prayers invite personal introspection, repentance, and rededication as we pledge our willingness to remember our Savior, Jesus the Christ. This commitment to become like Christ, repeated weekly, defines the supreme aspiration of Latter-day Saint life.

Frequent temple attendance, as our circumstances allow, is another way to keep our spiritual windows clean. Worship in the house of the Lord will keep a

our view of what matters most clear and sharp, focused crisply, and free from the dust of the world.

Testimony

I testify that the windows of heaven are indeed open. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's living prophet today. Joseph Smith is the Prophet of the Restoration. Jesus is the Christ, the Lord and Savior of all mankind. Our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of His children. The Lord has restored the network of eternal truth. We can open the windows of heaven to our personal view. Through these divine windows we can gaze with the Savior "upon the wide expanse of eternity,"²⁸ a universe without horizons, "worlds without end."²⁹ I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:9.
2. Amos 3:7.
3. Deuteronomy 29:4.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.
6. Ezra Taft Benson, mission presidents' seminar, 21 June 1988; see *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), p. 26. See also S. Dilworth Young, in Conference Report, Apr. 1952, p. 29; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978), p. 126; and *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 539.
7. Alma 7:23; italics added.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 1:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4, 5.
12. 3 Nephi 5:13.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 1:5, 2; italics added.
14. Alma 5:14, 19.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 4:6.
16. Matthew 5:16.
17. Matthew 5:15; italics added.
18. Malachi 3:10.
19. In Conference Report, Apr. 1982, p. 60; or *Ensign*, May 1982, p. 40; italics added.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 89:1, 4.
21. See "Milestones," *Time*, 24 July 1995, p. 19.
22. See Doctrine and Covenants 89:18–21.
23. See Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, pp. 87–88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 69. See also James E. Enstrom, "Health Practices and Cancer Mortality among Active California Mormons," *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, 6 Dec. 1989, pp. 1807–14; Edward Norden, "How to Live As Long As They Do," *Longevity*, Sept. 1990, pp. 72–73.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 89:19.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
26. Moses 6:61.
27. In Conference Report, Apr. 1989, p. 41; or *Ensign*, May 1989, pp. 32–33; italics added.
28. Doctrine and Covenants 38:1.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 76:112.

Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen

Man is that he might have joy

President Hinckley, I feel that I can speak for the Saints throughout the world, that we were profoundly stirred by your prophetic charge to move the work forward with greater energy. We pledge our lives and our obedience to accomplish that purpose.

While teaching at BYU in 1978, Brother Dennis Rasmussen applied and was selected to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. In the opening session, as he gave his name and university, Rabbi Muffs boomed, "You're the Mormon! . . . Do you pay your tithing?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Do you pay it with a joyful heart?"

"Yes," he said.

"I believe," the rabbi said, "that joy is the essence of religion. There is nothing more fundamental to religious living than joy. . . . I am working on a book about joy."

Brother Rasmussen responded, "There's a passage in the Book of Mormon that you might like. It says, 'Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.'"¹

Rabbi Muffs was profoundly touched and exclaimed, "I've found the text I've searched for all my life . . . in the Book of Mormon." Turning to Brother Rasmussen he said, "Say it again, but not so fast." As he repeated the familiar words, the rabbi's eyes glowed in appreciation of this great truth he understood but had not heard so succinctly expressed.²

How important it is to know the purpose of our existence. Man is that he might have joy, and that joy will come to us as we keep God's commandments!³

Joy in the Basuare family

Last February I saw this joy personified as I accompanied the missionaries in Santiago, Chile, to visit some of their converts. At the Basuare home, eight-year-old twin boys, Nicolas and Ignacio, met us at the door, dressed in white shirts and ties, just like missionaries. Their father had been baptized three weeks earlier, and the following week he baptized his wife and sons. We talked of their conversion. They shared their feelings of love for the missionaries and the joy they were experiencing in living the gospel and keeping the commandments. They proudly showed us the picture of the Santiago temple displayed in their living room, a symbol of their goal to become an eternal family one year from the date of their baptism.

I asked Nicolas if he would like to be a missionary when he grew up. He answered yes, and we shook hands on the

promise that he would prepare for the day. Then I asked Ignacio the same question. He hesitated and replied, "I'm not sure I can make that promise. I'm only eight years old."

I persisted, "Nicolas made the promise. Wouldn't you like to do the same?"

He still hesitated and said, "I don't know if I could be ready."

I could see I had taken on more than I could manage, so I said, "Perhaps you'd better talk this over with your father."

He went to his father, who took him in his arms and said, "Ignacio, Jesus was a missionary. He walked the streets like Elder Sheets and his companion and made the people happy by teaching them to keep the commandments. Wouldn't you like to be like Jesus?"

"Yes, Papi, I would."

"Do you think if we work together, you can be ready to be a missionary when you are nineteen years old?"

"I think so."

"Wouldn't you like to make the promise to Elder Mickelsen that you will do that?"

He came to me, and we shook hands to confirm the promise. I marveled that this young father, a convert of just three weeks, could be so sensitive in helping his family follow the Savior and how he emulated the missionaries in teaching his son. Their goal of becoming an eternal family will surely be reached under the guidance of this faithful father.

Teaching the Ten Commandments to children

Since the beginning of creation such family happiness has been central to our Heavenly Father's plan. Having been cast out of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve began to multiply and replenish the earth. As their family increased, they called upon the Lord for help. He gave them commandments and told them to teach them to their children.⁴ These eternal laws were reiterated to Moses on Si-

nai, summed up by the Savior in the two great commandments,⁵ and repeated to Joseph Smith in a revelation known as the "law of the Church."⁶ We also must teach these commandments to our children. Our happiness in this life and joy in the future as eternal families depend on how well we *live* them. I believe we can teach the Ten Commandments to our children in a positive way so they will reflect the higher law the Savior has given us.

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."⁷ Teach them that God lives, that He really does exist, and that He is the literal Father of our spirits. We are created in His image. We have all of His attributes in embryo.⁸ He loves us and wants us to be like Him. He wants us to communicate with Him. *Teach them to pray.*

2. Thou shalt not bow to any graven image.⁹ *Our Father in Heaven must come first. Nothing in this world can take His place.* Teach your children to recognize His hand in all things, to respect and honor Him.¹⁰ Show them how to worship Him through selfless service to others. Worship Him in family prayer and family home evening. We fail to worship Him when we give preeminence to sports, academics, entertainment, wealth, vanity, or anything else of this world.

3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."¹¹ Prepare your children to take upon themselves the name of Christ through the covenant of baptism. When we make this covenant, we become known as His children and promise to keep His commandments.¹² When we break the promises and covenants we make to Him and do not repent, we take His name in vain.¹³

4. Thou shalt honor the Sabbath day to keep it holy.¹⁴ Teach your children to set apart one-seventh of their time to learn of Him, to take their minds from the burdens of daily work, and to remember Him. As we dedicate this time to

Him, it concentrates our hearts and our minds on the *real purpose* of our existence and takes us out of the world. It is a day to become as He is, to worship Him, and to minister to others as He did. We don't need rules for the Sabbath day when we understand and live its purpose.

5. "Honour thy father and thy mother."¹⁵ Teach your children obedience; train them up in the way they should go.¹⁶ Our children learn to obey their Father in Heaven through honoring, respecting, and obeying their earthly parents. Teach them family ethics and establish the parameters of their conduct. The Lord gave the children of Israel the promise that their days would be long upon the land the Lord had given them. The same promise is valid today. For them it was the land of Canaan; for us it is eternal life with our families.¹⁷

6. "Thou shalt not kill."¹⁸ We are created in the image of God.¹⁹ The union of the flesh with the spirit can bring us a fulness of joy.²⁰ Teach your children to respect the sanctity of human life, to revere it and cherish it. Human life is the precious stepping-stone to eternal life, and we must jealously guard it from the moment of conception.²¹

7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery."²² Teach your children that our bodies are temples of God, wherein the Spirit of God can dwell.²³ Teach them the sacred nature of the family, the beauty of marriage, and the godlike nature of procreation, which our Father in Heaven has given us. We enter into a partnership with Him in the creation of life. This power must be respected, protected, and exercised only within the sacred bonds of marriage.²⁴ It is a celestial power that, if abused, will be taken away.

8. "Thou shalt not steal."²⁵ Teach your children to be honest and to respect that which belongs to others, especially that which belongs to our Father in Heaven. Teach them by example to pay a full tithing and give generous offerings.

As they stamp their actions with honesty, they will be filled with the Spirit and power of God.²⁶ Teach them the joy of giving and sharing.²⁷

9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness."²⁸ Teach your children to always tell the truth, to tell things as they really are, to build, to find the good in others, and to be positive and complimentary. Truth is more precious than any earthly possession. Truth is the essence of our existence.²⁹ As we tell the truth, our confidence will wax strong in the presence of God and our fellowman.³⁰

10. "Thou shalt not covet."³¹ We must love our children and teach them they are children of a Heavenly Father, who loves them. As they feel our love, they will feel His love and will be grateful for their good name and for the name of Christ, which they bear. As they feel our love and the love of their Heavenly Father, they feel no need for the possessions of others. Help them to measure personal progress and not compare themselves to others. Teach them to love others and to rejoice with their achievements.

Eternal laws of happiness

As we keep the Ten Commandments, we express our love to God, and with the active application of these eternal principles, we express our love to our fellowmen. These are eternal laws of happiness that, if followed, will lead us back to our Father in Heaven.³² I pray that we may be able to teach them by example and precept. May we all feel the joy the Ba-sure family felt as they came to know the truth of the gospel and are now teaching the commandments to their children.

With a positive understanding of the commandments, our children will have a greater desire to follow them and a better comprehension of the power of the Atonement for forgiveness when they make mistakes. As they understand His sacrifice for us, they will repent and go

forward with a perfect brightness of hope, knowing that Christ will pay for their sins if they follow Him.³³

May we teach and live the commandments so that together with our families we may fill the measure of our creation³⁴ and obtain the joy our Father in Heaven desires for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25; compare Moses 5:10; 6:48.
2. Dennis Rasmussen, "An Elder among the Rabbis," *Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1981, pp. 344-45.
3. See Jacob 5:75; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), pp. 276-77.
4. See Moses 5:1-5; 6:57-62; Doctrine and Covenants 20:19.
5. See Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:33.
6. See headnote to and text of Doctrine and Covenants 42.
7. Exodus 20:3.
8. See James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), p. 487.
9. See Exodus 20:4-5; Matthew 19:16-22; 2 Nephi 27:25; Acts 17:29; Doctrine and Covenants 93:19.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:21; Alma 31:5.
11. Exodus 20:7.
12. See Alma 19:35; Mosiah 5:7; Moses 5:1-9; Doctrine and Covenants 20:37; Moroni 6:1-8.
13. See Proverbs 30:9; Doctrine and Covenants 136:21.
14. See Exodus 20:8-11; Doctrine and Covenants 59:9-14.
15. Exodus 20:12.
16. See Proverbs 22:6; *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941), p. 207; Hebrews 12:9.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
18. Exodus 20:13; see also Doctrine and Covenants 42:18; Matthew 19:18.

19. See Genesis 1:27; Moses 1:13; Mosiah 7:27; Ether 3:16–17.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:33.
21. See James E. Faust, Brigham Young University devotional address, 15 Nov. 1994.
22. Exodus 20:14; see also Doctrine and Covenants 42:24.
23. See 1 Corinthians 6:19.
24. See Doctrine and Covenants 49:15–17.
25. Exodus 20:15; see also Matthew 19:18; Doctrine and Covenants 42:20; Doctrine and Covenants 119; Malachi 3:8–11.
26. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 43.
27. See Matthew 5:42; Acts 20:35.
28. Exodus 20:16; Matthew 19:18.
29. See *Hymns*, no. 272; Doctrine and Covenants 93:24; John 8:32.
30. See Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
31. Exodus 20:17; see also Doctrine and Covenants 19:25.
32. See 2 Nephi 9:18–24.
33. See 2 Nephi 31:20.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:19; John Taylor, *The Government of God*

(Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1852), pp. 32–46.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy. We sent Brother Mickelsen and Sister Mickelsen to South America for a three-year call. They stayed five years. I'm amazed that his English is as proficient as it is. He could have given the same sermon in Spanish equally as well.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing that favorite hymn of President Spencer W. Kimball, "I Need Thee Every Hour." Then Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, first counselor in the Primary general presidency, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

Sister Anne G. Wirthlin

Scriptures pertaining to children

Brothers and sisters, just one year ago Sister Susan Warner and I were sustained as counselors to Sister Patricia Pinegar in a new Primary general presidency. Having reared twenty-four children between us, we might have had reason to feel quite confident in our ability to understand the needs of children. However, the responsibility of representing the children of the Church in today's world weighed heavily upon us. Our greatest desire was to know the will of our Father in Heaven and to seek His direction. In counseling with Elder Robert D. Hales at the time of our call, he suggested that as we read our scriptures, we mark the passages that pertain to children. We found there are many. In

fact it seems that the scriptures were written for families. The prophets have left no doubt as to the desires of the Lord regarding His little ones:

Nephi began his record, "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1).

Enos began his record, "Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it" (Enos 1:1).

Our Primary theme is from the words of Isaiah: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13).

How do we teach children?

Our Father in Heaven wants us to teach His children, to teach them who they really are, and to bring them to the Savior. In her general conference message last October, I remember Sister Pinegar's searching question: "Who will teach the children?" It was not only a question but an invitation for all of us, all of us who find children within the circle of our influence, to answer the call of our Father in Heaven to teach His children.

As we humbly try to answer that call, another more probing question comes to mind: How do we teach the children? How do we impress the word of the Lord upon their hearts while they are young so that as they grow into the years of their youth, they will have the ability to discern between truth and error and the inner strength to resist temptation? How can we so nourish them in their spiritual growth that their obedience moves from mere outward compliance to an inward desire born out of a love for their Father in Heaven and an understanding of who they are?

Teach children to love the Lord

These questions, while perplexing to us, are not unique to our day. They have challenged parents through all generations. And the counsel of the Lord, though given hundreds of years ago through Moses to the children of Israel, is as if He were speaking to us today. In Deuteronomy we read:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. . . .

"And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7, 9).

When first we love the Lord with all our hearts, then we can lead our children to Him in all of our interactions. They will grow in their devotion to the Lord as they see our devotion to Him. They will understand the power of prayer as they hear us pray to a loving Heavenly Father, who is there listening and answering our prayers. They will understand faith as they see us live by faith. And they will learn the power of love by the kind and respectful ways that we relate to them. We cannot teach truth to our children apart from the trusting, caring relationships that we have with them. Elder Howard W. Hunter said, "A successful parent is one who has loved, one who has sacrificed, and one who has cared for, taught, and ministered to the needs of a child" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1983, p. 94; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 65).

When our children feel our love for the Lord and our unconditional love for them, then our example becomes a meaningful guide to them as they develop their own spiritual strength. Remember the Lord's commandment to the Israelites to, first, put His words in their hearts, and then He said, "Teach them diligently unto thy children" (Deuteronomy 6:7). In all that we do we can teach our children to love the Lord. At times our most impressionable teaching happens when we don't even realize that we're teaching.

I remember as a teacher of the eleven-year-old girls in Primary, we held a luncheon for the girls and their mothers. I had asked each girl to introduce her mother and tell one thing that she admired about her. One of the girls said that she knew that her mother loved to read the scriptures. She held up her scriptures and said, "I can tell where she has been in the house by where I find her scriptures." I have remembered that example over the years and thought how

natural it would have been for that mother to transmit a love of the scriptures to her children, because she had developed that love herself. We teach first what we are—and those are the impressions that live in the minds and hearts of our children.

Home—an oasis in the world

There is a spirit that pervades in our homes when there is a love of the Lord, a love for one another, and a commitment to obedience that springs out of that love. As I speak of that spirit, I remember our mission home in Frankfurt, Germany, where my husband served as mission president. Our daughter, Marianne, was ten years old at the time. Some of her friends from school would come to the mission home and occasionally stay overnight. One night, one of her friends said, "I like to come to your house because I feel safe here." Marianne understood what she meant—all of our family knew the spirit of the mission home. It was a legacy that was left by thousands of dedicated missionaries who had passed through that home and shared their testimonies and their love for their Heavenly Father and the Savior. It is a spirit that can be felt in all of our homes when as families we share testimonies and feelings of the Spirit as we read the scriptures and when we kneel together in prayer.

President Kimball shared vivid memories of his home when the family knelt before meals to pray, their chairs turned back from the table, dinner plates upside down. He remembers night prayers at his mother's knee. He said, "I feel sorry for children who must learn these important lessons after they are grown, when it is so much harder" (in Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977], p. 31). Home can be an oasis in the world. It's a place where every child has a right to feel safe.

Children's testimonies nourished by love

In a fast and testimony meeting I attended recently in my own ward, three children bore their testimonies. Richie stood at the beginning of the meeting and said, "Last night I was reading from 1 Nephi, chapters 1, 2, and 3; and as I was reading I felt a great feeling of peace. I felt good inside. I'm thankful for the scriptures."

Charity told of an experience she had of attending a concert with her family and becoming separated from her parents. She said, "I found a corner and sat down and prayed to Heavenly Father. I asked Him to send the Holy Ghost to be with me until my parents could find me—and I wasn't afraid."

Spencer had just been ordained to be a deacon. He expressed his appreciation for the bishop who had ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood and told how much it meant to him to be a deacon. These children had been touched in their hearts by parents, teachers, and leaders who first loved the Lord and then turned the children to Him.

Touch the hearts of the children

Within our family circle we can help our children identify feelings of the Spirit and encourage them to express those feelings in their own words. We can invite them to share the things they are learning in Primary and other Church meetings. By so doing we open the door for the Spirit to confirm those teachings in their hearts.

Brothers and sisters, we can touch the hearts of our children and bring them to the Savior. They will see Him first through our eyes, and they will learn how to know and love Him as their most trusted friend. They will understand what it means to have His Spirit to be with them—and that will be their strength. It is my prayer, my brothers and sisters, that we may all keep that vision before

us, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to Sister Anne G. Wirthlin, first counselor in the Pri-

mary general presidency. Elder Hans B. Ringger, who received emeritus status at the Saturday afternoon session, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, who was released as a member of the Seventy yesterday afternoon.

Elder Hans B. Ringger

"Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Crowds pushed toward Christ along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, eager to hear His message as He began His mission to mankind. Many disciples followed Him during these days. However, some of them were offended by Christ's teachings and turned away from Him. Upon their departure Christ asked His twelve disciples if they also wanted to leave Him. Simon Peter answered Christ's question by asking, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (John 6:68).

This question is as relevant and urgent today as it was 2,000 years ago. As Latter-day Saints we believe that Christ shows us the way and place to go and what we must do to find Him. It is up to each of us to recognize Christ's way and to follow it.

Bring life into harmony with God

A few months ago I had the privilege to hear a powerful testimony from a man searching for the truth. Through the gospel his eyes were opened to the eternal and he was able to redirect his life. At the same time I learned that a faithful member of the Church had distanced himself from the gospel and had changed his beliefs. Both men had tried with good intentions to find out to whom they should go but arrived at opposite conclusions and, therefore, went on diverging paths. What can be the cause for such opposing actions?

I believe that words and actions are rooted in our thoughts and that our thoughts determine our deeds. Our daily decisions, planned or spontaneous, are the result of our thoughts, and we are responsible for them. Although we as individuals might think that we are and can act independently of God, we cannot escape the realization that we are subject to eternal laws. Our happiness and our peace in this life, as well as in the life after, depend on our readiness to base our thoughts and actions on God-given laws. True peace of mind and everlasting happiness come from being in harmony with God. If we are to be one with Deity, then it is we who must change—and not God.

I believe that the two men chose different paths because their way of thinking and their understanding of God are different. It is essential to know God so that we can gain eternal blessings and salvation through living in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Gaining a knowledge of Christ and God is a prerequisite for a true understanding of our mission in life. Lowell L. Bennion writes in his book *Legacies of Jesus*: "One of the most important things we need to learn is what are the attributes of God. Christ came to earth to reveal to us the character of God. He is the revelation of God to human beings, teaching us by precept and example the meaning of faith, humility, integrity, and love" (*Legacies of Jesus* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1990], p. 61).

Follow in Christ's footsteps

We learn of God through Christ's life; we know God through following Christ's example. My dear brothers and sisters and friends and listeners, let us truly know our Savior and His Father. We should ask ourselves if our decisions are in accordance with the example of Christ, that we may follow in Christ's footsteps. Let us not be deceived or dissuaded from Christ's way, but let us reap the blessings of peace and eternal joy through following Him.

Christ's teachings, His example, and His perfection leave no question that He is the Son of God. He says of Himself, "And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11).

With that knowledge of Him we are promised, as it is written in John, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which . . . believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40).

Accept the restored gospel

In order to go the right direction in life and receive the blessings of the gospel, it is important first to be willing to accept the restored gospel in all its fulness. Christ said to Joseph Smith regarding the restoration of His gospel, "A light shall break forth . . . , and it shall be the fulness of my gospel" (D&C 45:28).

In addition, it is important to accept God's divine authority and the authority of His servants. Paul explained to the branch in Ephesus why authority was given and why we will be blessed when following the servants of the Lord. He wrote:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Obey without compromise

Further, as we know God's commandments, we must keep them without compromises or exceptions. We are at times tempted to place less importance on the teachings of Christ in our lives for the sake of convenience, or we let external circumstances pollute our faith. To help us escape seductive influences that take us away from Christ, He commands us, "That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day" (D&C 59:9).

To follow His commandments will bring freedom, independence, strength, and true happiness. I therefore ask everyone this day, "To whom shall we go?" Let us decide to follow Christ and be His true disciples, not offended by His message of truth but rejoicing in it. I know no other way or place where we can go, and thus add my testimony to the one of Simon Peter when he said to Christ:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).

I testify to you that Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son. They are real. Jesus is risen. He is our Christ and Savior. He is the Son of the living God. This knowledge is my faith, my testimony, and my life. I pray that we all may come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and act accordingly with a pure heart, with hope, and with charity. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Durrel A. Woolsey

A strategy for war

I would like to speak to you today about a strategy for war. We sing the hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers! Marching as to war" (*Hymns*, no. 246). Paul said, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8). In the book of Revelation we are told of a war in heaven (see Revelation 12:7). What kind of battle? What kind of war?

The war is for the souls of men. The battle lines have been drawn since Adam: evil versus righteousness. In this the final dispensation and in preparation for the Millennium, the forces of evil have intensified and united under the powerful influences of Satan. On the opposite side of the line, the kingdom of God is clearly sounding the trumpet of righteousness as perhaps never before. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is on the offensive in the declaration of good to be good and evil to be evil.

Satan's influence in the latter days

Isaiah prophesied of our time on this very subject when he said, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). Satan offers a strange mixture of just enough good to disguise the evil along his downward path to destruction, as described by Nephi, an ancient prophet, when he said:

"For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

"And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth

them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:20–21).

Satan does rage in the hearts of some. Many he will lull away into carnal security; others he flattereth, or he says there is no hell. He has lured and enlisted many followers with enticements of fame, riches, and power. He forges a Rembrandt-quality representation by calling evil good and good evil. He has confused many people, even nations and leaders, to the point of an immoral approach to moral issues.

Let me mention just three examples of voices that are ungodly and powerful among Satan's many proclamations. First, he says individual agency is justification for the destruction of a human life through abortion; second, same-gender intimate associations and even marriages are acceptable; and third, chastity and fidelity are old-fashioned and narrow-minded—to be sexually active with free expression is acceptable.

At this very moment, international heroes in sports, music, and movies not only live immoral lives but teach that immorality around the world through the powerful influence of the media. They are idolized and accepted by millions worldwide. The world in general seems to have lapsed into a coma of unrighteousness, leaving God-given and time-honored moral values and principles behind.

The need for Christ-centered living

The Brethren have said to push the world back. We are many more than the ten needed to save Sodom and Gomorrah. How will we fight this battle as it continues? The faithful Saints of God, with the undergirding of His holy priesthood, are the most powerful force on earth. We must hold fast to forceful proclamations from God regarding the sanctity of life, His eternal and never-

ending instruction to be chaste and pure. His loving counsel that families are ordained of God with a father, mother, and children to live together forever was not intended to be the exception but the rule. A return to Christ by an individual will bring peace of mind in place of turmoil, tranquillity to replace strife, courage and optimism in place of fear.

This Christ-centered way of living is not only for individuals but for families, entire governments, and nations, and will bring about similar results. For example, the individual or even a nation living a chaste and virtuous life has little to fear of the dread disease AIDS. Fatherless families created through strife and divorce would be virtually unknown.

Ten symptoms of the descending path

As you survey your individual responsibility, where do you stand? There are symptoms or warnings of the descending path. Ten symptoms to be aware of might be:

- An increasing shortness of vision or an inability to see clearly things of a spiritual nature.
- An ever-increasing callousness to things of God.
- A hardening of the spiritual arteries—attention to spiritual needs moves from daily or weekly to monthly, then occasionally, then not at all.
- An increasing dependence upon a growing army of psychiatric specialists instead of priesthood, God, and self.
- An increasing independence from spiritual things.
- An increasing number of friends with lower moral standards.
- Quotes from talk shows instead of scriptures.
- Raised voices in place of subdued tones.
- Verbal, even physical, abuse replacing a circle of love.
- Gradual acceptance of evil—not all at once, but a little bit at a time.

The prescription for victory

Some are more familiar with the location of sand traps on the golf course or a good tennis backhand than with the location of lifesaving scriptures. Many search for happiness in current financial pages instead of the inspired counsel from prophets. I have observed that the great majority of people the world over waste and wear out their lives making major commitments of time and effort toward projects that have absolutely no exalting benefits yet have eternal consequences.

We must be involved in a good and a righteous cause. We must see through the glass clearly, with an objective look at ourselves and families so as not to be caught in the second great calamitous worldwide flood that is even now all around us. It has been prophesied that the faithful will win this great war, that they will triumphantly rise up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of His second coming. The prescription for this victory includes daily individual and family prayers with a family home evening at least weekly. You may say, "I don't have time." Brothers and sisters, you simply cannot afford not to take the time. It is amazing how much time suddenly becomes available with the television off. This prescription continues the same as it has always been—keep the commandments; follow the prophets; read, understand, and even ponder the scriptures.

I testify that God lives, that His Son, Jesus Christ, has brought to pass the reality of the plan of redemption. Because of Him and His loving atonement, those who desire will win the war and be together with Him eternally. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We express our appreciation for the addresses we have just heard and for the

faithful service rendered by Elder Hans B. Ringger and Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, truly giants of the Lord.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Perfection pending

If I were to ask which of the Lord's commandments is most difficult to keep, many of us might cite Matthew 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹

Keeping this commandment can be a concern because each of us is far from perfect, both spiritually and temporally. Reminders come repeatedly. We may lock keys inside the car or even forget where the car is parked. And not infrequently we walk intently from one part of the house to another, only to forget the reason for the errand.

When comparing one's personal performance with the supreme standard of the Lord's expectation, the reality of imperfection can at times be depressing. My heart goes out to conscientious Saints who, because of their shortcomings, allow feelings of depression to rob them of happiness in life.

We all need to remember: men are that they might have joy—not guilt trips!² We also need to remember that the Lord gives no commandments that are impossible to obey. But sometimes we fail to comprehend them fully.

Our understanding of perfection might be aided if we classify it into two categories. The first could pertain uniquely to this life—*mortal* perfection. The second category could pertain uniquely to the next life—*immortal* or *eternal* perfection.

Mortal perfection

In this life certain actions can be perfected. A baseball pitcher can throw a no-hit, no-run ball game. A surgeon can

perform an operation without an error. A musician can render a selection without a mistake. One can likewise achieve perfection in being punctual, paying tithing, keeping the Word of Wisdom, and so on. The enormous effort required to attain such self-mastery is rewarded with a deep sense of satisfaction. More importantly, spiritual attainments in mortality accompany us into eternity.³

James gave a practical standard by which mortal perfection could be measured. He said, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man."⁴

Scriptures have described Noah, Seth, and Job as *perfect* men.⁵ No doubt the same term might apply to a large number of faithful disciples in various dispensations. Alma said that "there were many, exceedingly great many,"⁶ who were pure before the Lord.

This does not mean that these people never made mistakes or never had need of correction. The process of perfection includes challenges to overcome and steps to repentance that may be very painful.⁷ There is a proper place for chastisement in the molding of character, for we know that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."⁸

Mortal perfection can be achieved as we try to perform every duty, keep every law, and strive to be as perfect in our sphere as our Heavenly Father is in His. If we do the best we can, the Lord will bless us according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts.⁹

Eternal perfection

But Jesus asked for more than mortal perfection. The moment He uttered the words "even as your Father which is

in heaven is perfect," He raised our sights beyond the bounds of mortality. Our Heavenly Father has eternal perfection. This very fact merits a much broader perspective.

Recently I studied the English and Greek editions of the New Testament, concentrating on each use of the term *perfect* and its derivatives. Studying both languages together provided some interesting insights, since Greek was the original language of the New Testament.

In Matthew 5:48 the term *perfect* was translated from the Greek *teleios*, which means "complete." *Teleios* is an adjective derived from the noun *telos*, which means "end."¹⁰ The infinitive form of the verb is *teleiono*, which means "to reach a distant end, to be fully developed, to consummate, or to finish."¹¹ Please note that the word does not imply freedom from error; it implies achieving a distant objective. In fact, when writers of the Greek New Testament wished to describe perfection of behavior—precision or excellence of human effort—they did not employ a form of *teleios*; instead, they chose different words.¹²

Teleios is not a total stranger to us. From it comes the prefix *tele-* that we use every day. *Telephone* literally means "distant talk." *Television* means "to see distantly." *Telephoto* means "distant light," and so on.

With that background in mind, let us consider another highly significant statement made by the Lord. Just prior to His crucifixion, He said that on "the third day I shall be perfected."¹³ Think of that! The sinless, errorless Lord—already perfect by our mortal standards—proclaimed His own state of perfection yet to be in the future.¹⁴ His eternal perfection would follow His resurrection and receipt of "all power . . . in heaven and in earth."¹⁵

The perfection that the Savior envisions for us is much more than errorless performance. It is the eternal expectation as expressed by the Lord in His great

intercessory prayer to His Father—that we might be made perfect and be able to dwell with them in the eternities ahead.¹⁶

The Lord's entire work and glory pertains to the immortality and eternal life of each human being.¹⁷ He came into the world to do the will of His Father, who sent Him.¹⁸ His sacred responsibility was foreseen before the Creation¹⁹ and was foretold by all His holy prophets since the world began.²⁰

The atonement of Christ fulfilled the long-awaited purpose for which He had come to the earth. His concluding words upon Calvary's cross referred to the culmination of His assignment—to atone for all humankind. Then He said, "It is finished."²¹ Not surprisingly, the Greek word from which *finished* was derived is *teleios*.

That Jesus attained eternal perfection following His resurrection is confirmed in the Book of Mormon. It records the visit of the resurrected Lord to the people of ancient America. There He repeated the important injunction previously cited but with one very significant addition. He said, "I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect."²² This time He listed himself along with His Father as a perfected personage. Previously He had not.²³

Resurrection is requisite for eternal perfection. Thanks to the atonement of Jesus Christ, our bodies, corruptible in mortality, will become incorruptible. Our physical frames, now subject to disease, death, and decay, will acquire immortal glory.²⁴ Presently sustained by the blood of life²⁵ and ever aging, our bodies will be sustained by spirit and become changeless and beyond the bounds of death.²⁶

Eternal perfection is reserved for those who overcome all things and inherit the fulness of the Father in His heavenly mansions. Perfection consists in gaining eternal life—the kind of life that God lives.²⁷

Ordinances and covenants of the temple

Scriptures identify other important prerequisites to eternal perfection. They relate to the ordinances and covenants of the temple.²⁸ No accountable individual can receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom without the ordinances of the temple. Endowments and sealings are for our personal perfection and are secured through our faithfulness.²⁹

This requirement also pertains to our ancestors. Paul taught “that they without us should not be made *perfect*.”³⁰ Again, in that verse, the Greek term from which *perfect* was translated was a form of *teleios*.³¹

In latter-day revelation the Lord was even more explicit. His prophet wrote: “My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation. . . . They without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”³²

Encouragement from the Savior's example

Our climb up the path to perfection is aided by encouragement from the scriptures. They hold the promise that we shall, if faithful in all things, become like Deity. John the beloved Apostle wrote:

“We should be called the sons [and daughters] of God. . . .

“ . . . When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”³³

Continuing encouragement comes as we follow the example of Jesus, who taught, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”³⁴ His hope for us is crystal clear! He declared: “What manner of men ought ye to be?

Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”³⁵ Thus our adoration of Jesus is best expressed by our emulation of Jesus.³⁶

People have never failed to follow Jesus because His standards were imprecise or insufficiently high. Quite to the contrary. Some have disregarded His teachings because they were viewed as being too precise or impractically high! Yet such lofty standards, when earnestly pursued, produce great inner peace and incomparable joy.

There is no other individual to compare with Jesus Christ, nor is there any other exhortation equal to His sublime expression of hope: “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”³⁷

This divine entreaty is consistent with the fact that as begotten children of heavenly parents, we are endowed with the potential to become like them, just as mortal children may become like their mortal parents.

The Lord restored His church to help us prepare for perfection. Paul said that the Savior placed in the Church apostles, prophets, and teachers “for the perfecting of the saints, . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”³⁸

The *perfect* man described in Paul's quotation is the completed person—*teleios*—the glorified soul!

Moroni taught how to gain this glorious objective. His instruction stands in any age as an antidote for depression and a prescription for joy. I echo his plea: “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; . . . love God with all your might, mind and strength. . . . [Then] ye may be perfect in Christ, . . . holy, [and] without spot.”³⁹

Meanwhile, brothers and sisters, let us do the best we can and try to improve

each day. When our imperfections appear, we can keep trying to correct them. We can be more forgiving of flaws in ourselves and among those we love. We can be comforted and forbearing. The Lord taught, "Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now . . . ; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected."⁴⁰

We need not be dismayed if our earnest efforts toward perfection now seem so arduous and endless. Perfection is pending. It can come in full only after the Resurrection and only through the Lord. It awaits all who love Him and keep His commandments. It includes thrones, kingdoms, principalities, powers, and dominions.⁴¹ It is the end for which we are to endure.⁴² It is the eternal perfection that God has in store for each of us. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Those words were given additional intensity in the Joseph Smith Translation: "Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (JST, Matthew 5:50).
2. See 2 Nephi 2:25.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19.
4. James 3:2; italics added.
5. See Genesis 6:9; Doctrine and Covenants 107:43; Job 1:1.
6. Alma 13:12.
7. See Hebrews 5:8.
8. Hebrews 12:6.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
10. Incidentally, the feminine form of this noun is *teleia*, the Greek term for a period at the end of a sentence.
11. Footnote *b* for Matthew 5:48 states: "GR complete, finished, fully developed" (LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979], p. 1195).
12. A few examples include:
 - "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast *perfected* praise" (Matthew 21:16; italics added).
 - "The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is *perfect* shall be as his master" (Luke 6:40; italics added). In both of these verses, *perfect* came from the Greek term *katartizo*, which means "to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust; to fit or frame for one's self"—an act of preparation.
 - Another speaks of "*perfect* understanding" (Luke 1:3; italics added). In this instance, *perfect* came from the Greek adverb *akribos*, which means "exactly, accurately."
 - Another verse refers to those who touched the hem of the Master's garment and "were made *perfectly* whole" (Matthew 14:36; italics added). *Perfect* in this instance came from the Greek *diasozo*, which means "to preserve through danger, to bring safely through, to save, keep from perishing, to rescue."
13. Luke 13:32; italics added.
14. In the Greek text of that proclamation, the verb *teleiono* was again used, in its future tense—*teleiouma*.
15. Matthew 28:18; see also Doctrine and Covenants 93:2–22.
16. See John 17:23–24.
17. See Moses 1:39.
18. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
19. See Moses 4:1–2; 7:62; Abraham 3:22–28.
20. See Acts 3:19–21.
21. John 19:30. In modern revelation Jesus used similar language. He said, "I partook and *finished* my preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19; italics added).
22. 3 Nephi 12:48; italics added.
23. See Matthew 5:48.
24. See Alma 11:45; Doctrine and Covenants 76:64–70.
25. See Leviticus 17:11.
26. "A resurrection means to become immortal, without blood, yet with a body

of flesh and bone" (LDS Bible Dictionary, p. 761).

27. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1946), p. 331; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 237.
28. Joseph Smith taught, "Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 162).
29. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 2:45.
30. Hebrews 11:40; italics added.
31. *Teleioo*
32. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 159.
33. 1 John 3:1-3. For additional commentary, see Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, pp. 7-9.
34. 1 Peter 1:16; see also Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26.
35. 3 Nephi 27:27.
36. See Neal A. Maxwell, *We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1984), p. 145; Hugh B. Brown, *The Abundant Life* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), p. 199.
37. 3 Nephi 12:48.
38. Ephesians 4:12-13; italics added.
39. Moroni 10:32-33.
40. Doctrine and Covenants 67:13.
41. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
42. This concept is supported by the fact that in verses of the New Testament that refer to the *end* for which we are to endure, the Greek word from which *end* was translated was also derived

from *telos* (see Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13).

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just addressed us.

It will now be our privilege to listen to President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved President of the Church, who will be our concluding speaker.

Before hearing his address, we express appreciation to the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region, the Mormon Youth Chorus, and the Tabernacle Choir and to their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music for this conference.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given the conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services who have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and the vast army of interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We express appreciation to local and national press representatives for the coverage of the conference. We're grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of the conference in many countries.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir will sing "Abide with Me!" The benediction will be offered by Elder Claudio R. Mendes Costa of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

The fabric of faith and testimony

This has been a most remarkable thing, this conference. We have listened to twenty-eight different speakers. No one was assigned a topic on which to speak. Each was free to choose his or her message. There is always the risk of repetition in that. But isn't it remarkable that all of it seems to have been woven together into a beautiful fabric of expression of faith and testimony. I am grateful for what we have heard. I will be a better man if I will put into my life the things of which I have been reminded in this conference, and I would like to suggest that each of you will be a better man or woman if you will put into your lives something of what you have heard in this great conference.

A praying people

Brethren and sisters, I know that you are a praying people. That is a wonderful thing in this day and time when the practice of prayer has slipped from many lives. To call upon the Lord for wisdom beyond our own, for strength to do what we ought to do, for comfort and consolation, and for the expression of gratitude is a significant and wonderful thing. We know that you pray for us, and we appreciate your prayers. They sustain us; they remind us of the great trust which you have placed in us. I want you to know that we pray for you always. We pray for you that you may be happy, and that in living the gospel there may be love and peace in your homes and growing goodness in your lives. That is what

this is all about, for God sent His Only Beloved Son "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The great purpose of the work in which we are engaged is to help each of us along the way of immortality and eternal life.

Our love and blessing for you

Please know of our great love for you. I thank the Lord every morning of my life for the restoration of the gospel and its meaning in the lives of faithful Latter-day Saints.

You parents, love your children. Cherish them. They are so precious. They are so very, very important. They are the future. You need more than your own wisdom in rearing them. You need the help of the Lord. Pray for that help and follow the inspiration which you receive.

Now, as we say good-bye to you at the conclusion of this conference, please know of our love for each of you. Even those who transgress, we want you to know that we love you. We cannot condone the sin, but we love the sinner.

God bless you. I leave my blessing upon you, that as you walk in faith there may be peace in your hearts and goodness and gladness in your lives, and that the Spirit of the Lord may dwell with you in your homes, to bring nurture to you and those you love most dearly, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Abide with Me!"

Elder Claudio R. Mendes Costa offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Mormon Youth Chorus, conducted by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by the combined ward choirs from the Cottonwood Utah Region. Jay J. Campbell conducted the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

At the general priesthood session a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus provided the music. Donald Ripplinger and Robert C. Bowden con-

ducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Donald Ripplinger and Craig Jessop, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson

Clerk of the Conference

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell** 4
 Visiting the sites of the Restoration; Hyrum Smith's legacy of faithfulness; Hyrum's relationship with Joseph; Hyrum's service to the Church; Hyrum's dedicated scripture study; Hyrum's faithful, believing heart; Hyrum's service to others; Hyrum's response to trials
- Beckham, Sister Janette Hales** 11
 Power to calm outside fears; Inner power of goodness and love; A family learns the power of love; The powers of heaven and of priesthood; The power of a mother's goodness; Seek the power of righteousness
- Brewerton, Elder Ted E.** 37
 Search Book of Mormon to know Christ; Ancient texts support Book of Mormon; Latter-day Lamanites recognize truth; A second witness of Christ; References to a bearded white god; The Book of Mormon—a firm anchor; The Holy Ghost gives primary evidence
- Burton, Bishop H. David** 57
 An "I will" attitude; "I wills" for priesthood holders; Commit to follow the living prophet; Become acquainted with Nephi; Young athletes honor the Sabbath; A baseball player's perseverance; Make family leadership top priority; Align our wills with God's will

D

- Dunn, Elder Loren C.** 35
 The law of witnesses; The calling of special witnesses; Church members are witnesses; Testimonies of special witnesses; My personal witness

E

- Eyring, Elder Henry B.** 49
 Called to touch lives; A deacon touches a life; Help others increase their faith; Help others want to obey; Teach with love, as Aaron did; Help others plant the seed; Teach when hearts are prepared; Prove love by service; Refresh and nurture others' faith; The Lord will make you fishers of men

F

- Faust, President James E. (priesthood session)** 60
 Dangers of living on the edge; Act rather than be acted upon; Joseph F. Smith stands firm; Avoid even the appearance of evil; Provide safety for women and children; How to satisfy internal emptiness; Getting the power of God into your life; Chosen in the premortal existence

Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session) 80

Priesthood blessings; Blessings strengthen and magnify us; Priesthood influence in the family; Ordained patriarchs; Patriarchal blessings—a star to follow; Patriarchal blessings come from God; Study and ponder patriarchal blessings; Fulfillment of promises; Declaration of lineage; The power of priesthood blessings; Live so that blessings can be fulfilled

G**General Authorities Present 1****General Priesthood Session 48****Goaslind, Elder Jack H 8**

Spiritual mountaintops; Testimony is a spiritual mountaintop; Link teaching to a testimony of Jesus; Climb above comfortable plateaus; Know, remember, and serve Christ; Anchor goodness in faith in Christ; Help children know and love the Savior

H**Haight, Elder David B. 97**

Getting along in years; Faithfulness brings strength; Parents' arduous journey to the temple; Sixty-five wonderful years of marriage; Journey to California; Seek first the kingdom of God; George Romney

Hales, Elder Robert D. 40

Blessings of the priesthood; The power of God; Priesthood given to man; The Savior's use of the priesthood; Priesthood withdrawn and restored; Priesthood blessings as a child grows; Priesthood blessings as youth grow; Priesthood blessings in the temple; Priesthood blessings for families; Seek earnestly for priesthood blessings; A sonnet testimony

Hillam, Elder Harold G. 54

Sacrifice in missionary service; Sacrifices of Mosiah's missionary sons; Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball; Elder Bugs's sacrifice; No sacrifice is too great for the Master

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) 3

Gathering for conference; Broadcasting conference to the world; The kingdom of God—one great family

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) 68

Miraculous missionary work; Prepare to serve a mission; Blessings of missionary service; Importance of temple work; Report on temple building; Our need for temple attendance; Growth in Church membership; Management of sacred Church funds; Great contributions of voluntary service; Growth of seminary and institute; Distribution of the Book of

Mormon; Growth in stakes, wards, and buildings; Our responsibility to advance the work

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) 92

A personal consecration; Expressions of love and faith; Expansion of the Church; Joshua and Caleb bring a good report; Gospel is good news, not doom and gloom; Pioneers' faith rose above doubts; To those who have drifted away; A call to move the work forward; Stay the course; keep the faith

Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) 120

The fabric of faith and testimony; A praying people; Our love and blessing for you

Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. 87

"This do in remembrance of me"; The sacrament—*our* passover; Privilege of Aaronic Priesthood holders; Sacramental prayers; Remember His pre-mortal life and birth; Remember His example and teachings; Remember His response to adversity; Remember what His wounds signify; Fortified by the sacramental feast

M

Maxwell, Elder Neal A. 27

Need for increased consecration; Serve the true Master; Examples of keeping back a portion; Greater consecration corrects omissions; Letting God educate our desires; The need to lose ourselves; Submission brings revelation and joy; Do not shrink from full consecration; Hard times can hasten consecration; Submit to God and trust Him; The only possession that is ours to give

Mickelsen, Elder Lynn A. 104

Man is that he might have joy; Joy in the Basuare family; Teaching the Ten Commandments to children; Eternal laws of happiness

Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) 64

Ye who are called to labor; Learn as youth to choose the right; Rescuing a woman from the Provo River; Follow the path to the celestial kingdom; Prepare for missions; Whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies; The Lord looketh on the heart; Who honors God, God honors

Monson, President Thomas S. (Sunday morning session) 75

The heavenly virtue of patience; Patience in adversity; Wendy Bennion's patience; The Savior's patience; Job's patience; Joseph Smith's patience; Stop, look, and listen; Angels in disguise; Promises made in eastern Germany; Patience brings fulfillment of promises

Music, Summary of Conference	121
Nelson, Elder Russell M.	115
Perfection pending; Mortal perfection; Eternal perfection; Ordinances and covenants of the temple; Encouragement from the Savior's example	

O

Oaks, Elder Dallin H.	31
Powerful ideas; We are children of God; The power of love; Mortal life has a purpose; The work of the Church is eternal; Heavenly Father will hear our prayers; The Resurrection and Atonement; Choose what builds, not what tears down; Put the Savior first; "Never take no cutoffs"; Focus on powerful ideas	

P

Packer, President Boyd K.	21
The brilliant morning of forgiveness; Alma feels the joy of forgiveness; The promise of complete forgiveness; Repentance: the way back; The need to make restitution; Comforting knowledge; We cannot condone unworthy conduct; Seek relief now; Never give up hope	
Perry, Elder L. Tom	45
Lehi's dream of the tree of life; Personal and family preparedness; "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear"; Gain an adequate education; Live within your income; Avoid unnecessary debt; Store a reserve of food and supplies; Prepare for less prosperous times; Hold to the iron rod	
Porter, Elder Bruce D.	16
Our similarities to the prodigal son; The Father's Eldest Son redeemed us; The Savior's sacrifices; Redeemer of Israel	
Priesthood Session, General	48

R

Ringger, Elder Hans B.	111
"Lord, to whom shall we go?" Bring life into harmony with God; Follow in Christ's footsteps; Accept the restored gospel; Obey without compromise	

S

Saturday Afternoon Session	25
Saturday Morning Session	2

Scott, Elder Richard G.	18
When the Lord answers no; Adversity from transgression; Adversity to accomplish the Lord's purposes; Trust in the Lord; The Savior's example in adversity; The Lord gives what we need; True happiness is centered in Christ; Finding peace during adversity; The Lord is preparing you for exaltation	
Summary of Conference Music	121
Sunday Afternoon Session	96
Sunday Morning Session	75
Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers	26

W

Wells, Elder Robert E.	85
The divine Sonship of Jesus Christ; The divine mission of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon; The divine nature of the Church	
Wirthlin, Sister Anne G.	108
Scriptures pertaining to children; How do we teach children? Teach children to love the Lord; Home—an oasis in the world; Children's testimonies nourished by love; Touch the hearts of the children	
Wirthlin, Elder Joseph B.	100
Windows of light and truth; Windows of revelation; Obedience opens the windows of heaven; Missionary service; The law of tithing; The Word of Wisdom; Word of wisdom for the mind; Gift of the Holy Ghost; Worthy worship; Testimony	
Woolsey, Elder Durrel A.	113
A strategy for war; Satan's influence in the latter days; The need for Christ-centered living; Ten symptoms of the descending path; The prescription for victory	

Z

Zwick, Elder W. Craig	14
Encircled in the Savior's love; Reach out to those with disabilities; Include those with disabilities; Contributions of those with disabilities; Learning from those with disabilities; The Savior's compassion	

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